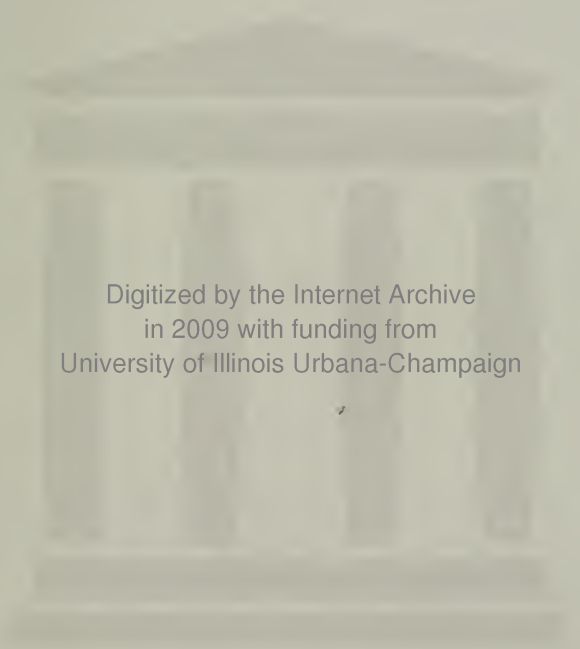


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# HARRY MUIR.

A STORY OF SCOTTISH LIFE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"PASSAGES IN THE LIFE OF MRS. MARGARET MAITLAND,"

"MERKLAND," "ADAM GRAEME," &c.

MRS. OLIPHANT

"God pardon thee! yet let me wonder, Harry,  
At thy affections. . . .  
The hope and expectation of thy time  
Is ruined; and the soul of every man,  
Prophetically, does forethink thy fall."

KING HENRY IV.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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# HARRY MUIR.

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## CHAPTER I.

“Housekeeping youth have ever homely wits.”

TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA.

“AND this is the pillar that Rob Roy hid behind, the Sabbath day that he warned the young English gentleman in the kirk. It’s the very place itsel. Here was the pulpit—and the seats were a’ here, and this is the pillar that hid Rob Roy.”

A party of young men were in the crypt of Glasgow cathedral—the little sleek,

humble-looking man, who very unobtrusively acted as Cicerone, was pointing out to them the notability, with these words.

One of the visitors turned away with a grave smile, and leaving his companions, began to wander slowly down one of the long black aisles. The dim withdrawing vistas—the pillars with their floral chaplets—the singular grace and majesty of those dark and ponderous arches—impressed him with very different associations. The young man's smile, slightly scornful at first, melted as he reached the lower end, and looking up through this grand avenue, saw the little knot of dim figures in the distance. He was glad to escape from their laughter, and unsuitable merriment. These noble old cloisters were too grave and solemn, to have their stillness so invaded.

But he was not suffered long to remain uninterrupted in his contemplative mood. "What ails Cuthbert?" said one of the



younger of the party, a lad in the transition state between boy and man. "See to him down yonder at the very end, like a crow in the mist—I say, Cuthbert!"

As the piping shrill voice called out his name at its highest pitch, the young man began slowly to advance again. The lad came forward to meet him. "What are you smiling at—what did you go away for?"

"I was smiling at myself, John," answered the accused.

John was curious. "What for?"

"For thinking there were things more interesting here, than the pillar that hid Rob Roy. Come along—never mind. Where are they all bound for, now?"

They were bound for a very dissimilar place—no other than the crowded Broomielaw, where John's brothers were bent upon showing their Edinburgh cousin, Cuthbert Charteris, and an English stranger who accompanied them, one or two fine

ships belonging to "the house" then in port. These young men were the sons of a prosperous merchant, all of them already in harness in the office, and beginning to make private ventures on their own behalf. There were three of them—Richard, Alick, and John Buchanan; the two elder had reached the full dignity of young manhood, and rejoiced in mighty whiskers, which John, poor fellow, could only covet intensely, and cultivate with all his might; but even John had begun to have the shrewd man of business engrafted on the boy, and was sometimes precociously calculating, and commercial—sometimes disagreeably swaggering and loud—though not unfrequently simple, foolish, and generous, as better became his years.

"I say, Cuthbert," said the communicative John, as he swung his arm through his grave cousin's, and followed his gay brothers on the way to the river, "did you ever see Harry Muir? Dick says

he's going to make him come and dine with us to-night."

"And who is Harry Muir?" asked Charteris.

"Oh, he's nobody—only a clerk in the office you know—but you never saw such a clever chap. He can sing anything you like. He's a grand singer. And when Harry's in a good humour, you should just hear him with the fellows in the office. My father looks out of his own room sometimes to see what's the row, and there's Gilchrist sucking his pen, and Macauley and Alick close down over their books, writing for a race, and Muir quite cool, and looking as innocent as can be. You should just see them, and see how puzzled my father is, when he finds that there's no row at all!"

"And in such emergencies, how do you behave yourself, Johnnie?"

"Johnnie! I wish you'd just mind that I'm not a boy now."

“ Jack, then ! Will that please you, young man,” said Charteris, smiling.

“ Me ? I behave the best way I can,” said the mollified John. “ The best plan is, to set to working, and never let on that you hear the door open ; but we like to get him among a lot of us when there’s nobody in the way ; and you’ll just see to-night, Cuthbert, what a grand fellow he is for fun.”

Cuthbert did not look very much delighted. “ And when is this famous dinner to be ?” he asked. “ Is Dick to entertain us at home ?”

Master John burst into a great laugh. “ Man, Cuthbert, what a simple fellow you are ! You don’t think my mother would ask Harry Muir to dine.”

“ And why not, my boy ?” asked the Edinburgh advocate.

“ Why not ! Man, is that the way you do in the east country ? He’s only a clerk, and everybody knows you Edin-

burgh folk are as proud as proud can be. Would you ask your clerk to dine with you?"

"I don't possess such an appendage, Sir John," said the briefless barrister, "except it be a little scrubby boy like what you were the last time I was west here—and he certainly would need some brushing up. So he's not a gentleman, this wit of yours? He would not be presentable in the drawing-room?"

"Hum! I don't know," said honest John, hesitating. "He looks quite as well as Dick or Alick, or that Liverpool man there." The lad drew himself up and arranged his neckcloth complacently. "There's handsomer men, to be sure; but I think Muir's better looking than any of you, Cuthbert."

Charteris laughed: "Is he not well-bred, then?"

"Oh yes, he can behave himself well

enough. He's got a way of his own, you know ; but then he's a clerk."

" And so are you, Jack, my man," said Charteris.

" Oh yes, but there's a difference. He's got no money—and more than that," said the juvenile merchant, " he's got no enterprise, Cuthbert. There's Alick, he had a share in a plan, sending out a lot of things to San Francisco on a venture, just when the news came about the gold, you know, and he cleared a hundred pounds ; that's the way to do. But then, that fellow Muir, he never tries a thing ; and worse than that, he went away and married somebody last year, and he had three sisters before, and them all living with him. Just think of that. Four women all dragging a young man down when he might be rising in the world. Isn't it awful?"

" A very serious burden," said Char-

teris, smiling, "but what is his salary, John?"

"His salary's sixty pounds; my father gives very good salaries. He's just a clerk, you know. The cashier has two hundred."

"Sixty pounds! and five people live on sixty pounds!" said the lawyer.

"And they've got a baby," said John, solemnly.

It was the climax; there was no more said.

The respectable firm of George Buchanan and Sons had its office in a dingy business street near the Exchange. The early darkness of the February night had almost blotted out the high sombre houses opposite, except for the gleaming gas-light streaming from office windows in irregular patches from garret to basement. It was not a very busy time, and at five o'clock the clerks were preparing to leave the office.

“ I say, Muir,” cried Richard Buchanan, bursting in hastily, “ come and dine with us.”

Charteris was behind. The famous Harry Muir was certainly handsome—very much better looking than any other of the party, and had a fine, sparkling, joyous, intelligent face—but the lines of it had everything in them but firmness.

“ Not to-night,” said the clerk, “ you must not ask me to-night.”

“ Why not to-night?” said the young master. “ Come along now, Harry. Do be a good fellow. Why it’s just to-night of all nights that we want you. There’s my cousin Charteris, and there’s an Englishman ; and we’re all as flat as the Clyde. Come along, Muir, don’t disoblige us.”

“ I am very sorry,” said Muir, “ but I can’t stay in town to-night. Let me off to-night ; I will be more obedient next time.”



“ He wants to get home to nurse his wife,” said Buchanan, with a sneer.

“ My wife is quite well,” answered Harry, with a quick flush of anger ; “ she does not need my nursing, Mr. Buchanan.”

“ *Mr. Buchanan!* don’t be ill-natured, Harry—come along.”

“ No, no ; I cannot go to-night. I don’t think I can stay to-night,” said the brilliant facile clerk.

The entreaties continued a little longer ; the resistance became feebler and more feeble, and at last, stipulating that he was to leave them early, the genius of the counting-house consented.

“ Harry, my man, send a message to your wife,” said a grave snuffy person, who enjoyed the two hundred pounds a year of which John had boasted, and was cashier to the Messrs. Buchanan.

Harry wavered a moment. “ Where is the boy?”

“ Perhaps she’ll come for you, Harry,” suggested the malicious Buchanan.

The poor clerk threw down, angrily, the pen he had taken up, and lifted his hat. In another minute, with quickly recovered gaiety, they went out in a band to the adjacent square where they were to dine.

“ There’s the makings of a capital man in that lad, and there’s the makings of a blackguard,” said the grave Mr. Gilchrist, shaking his head ruefully, and taking a pinch of snuff; “ it’ll be a hard race—which of them will win?”

The dinner in George’s-square went off very well, and the young clerk, as he warmed, dazzled the little company; he was only a clerk—they were inclined to patronize him at other times—but now the unmistakeable, undesired, pre-eminence, which these young men yielded to their poor companion, was a noticeable thing.

The matter of ambition now, was, who should seem most intimate with—who should most attract the attention of the brilliant clerk.

Cuthbert Charteris was a more completely educated man than any other of the party. The thorough literary training will not ally itself to the commercial, as it seems. None of the young merchants had time for the long discipline and athletic mental exercises of the student. They were all making money before they should have been well emancipated from the school-room—all independent men, when they should have been boys—and the contrast was marked enough. There was a good deal of boisterousness in their enjoyment, and they were enjoying themselves heartily, while Cuthbert, getting very weary, felt himself only preserved from utter impatience of their mirth by the interest with which the stranger in-

spired him—this poor, clever, facile Harry Muir.

The quick mind of this young man seemed to have attained somehow to the results of education without the training and discipline which form so principal a part of it. He seemed to have been a desultory reader, a devourer of everything which came in his way, and while the Buchanans knew few books beyond the serial literature of the time, Harry threw delicate allusions about him, which it seemed he made only for his own enjoyment, since the arrows flew most innocently over the heads of all the rest. Threads of connection with those great thoughts which form the common country of imaginative minds, ideas radiating out from the centre of these, like the lessening circles in the water—the student Cuthbert heard and understood, and wondered—the Buchanans applauded, and did not understand.

One of them at last proposed to go to the theatre—the rest chimed in eagerly. Cuthbert, anxious to have the evening concluded as soon as possible, and resolving to seek no more of the delectable society of his young cousins except at home, where they were tolerable, remonstrated only to be laughed at and overpowered. The grown-up, mature, educated man resigned himself to their boyish guidance very wearily—and what would their wit do now?

He said he would go home—he took up his hat, and played hesitatingly with his gloves. He was excited with the company, the applause, and a little with the wine, and was permitting himself to parley with the tempter.

“Come along, Muir, it’s only for once; let us just have this one night.”

“No, no.” The noes grew faint; the hesitation increased. He consented again.

And so, louder and more boisterous

than before, they again entered the busy streets. John Buchanan was a good deal inclined to be obstreperous. It was all that Cuthbert could manage to keep him within bounds.

They had reached the Trongate, and Cuthbert stopped his young companion a moment to look down the long gleaming line of the crowded street. It had been wet in the morning, and the brilliant light from the shop windows glistened in the wet causeway in long lines, and the shifting groups of passengers went and came, ceaselessly, and the hum and din of the great thoroughfare was softened by the gloom and brightened by the light of traffic that illuminated all.

“What are you looking at? See they’re all away across the street. What’s the good of glowering down the Trongate? Man, Cuthbert, how slow you are,” said John Buchanan, dragging the loiterer on.

There was a crowd on the opposite side which had absorbed the others. Cuthbert and John crossed over.

The accident which attracted the crowd was a very common one—an overtasked horse, wearied with the long day's labour, had stumbled and fallen; and now, the weight of the cart to which it was attached having been removed, was making convulsive plunges in the effort to rise. The carters, and the kindred class who are always to be found ready in such small emergencies, were leaping aside themselves, and pressing back the lookers on, as the poor animal struck out his great weary limbs, endeavouring to raise himself from the ground.

Suddenly there was a shrill cry—"The wean—look at the wean; the brute's fit'll kill the wean."

John Buchanan had pushed his way into the crowd, dragging with him the



reluctant Cuthbert—and there indeed, close to the great hoofs of the prostrate animal, stood one of those little pale, careworn, withered children whom one sees only in the streets of great cities, and oftenest only at this unwholesome hour of night. But the acuteness peculiar to the class seemed to have forsaken the very little wrinkled old man of the Trongate. He was standing where the next plunge would inevitably throw him down, with the strange scared look which is not fear, common to children in great peril, upon his small white puckered face. Again the panting horse threw out his hoofs in another convulsive exertion. The child was down.

A shadow shot across the light. There were several cries of women. The child was thrown into somebody's arms uninjured. The horse was on its feet, and a man, indistinctly seen in the midst of the



eager crowd, struggled ineffectually to raise himself from the ground, where he had fallen.

“ I am hurt a little,” said the voice of Harry Muir. “ Never mind, it is not much, I dare say. Some of you help me up.”

There was a rush to assist him ; a burst of eager inquiries.

“ I got a blow from the hoof; ah ! I can't tell what it is,” gasped the young man, over whose face the pallor of deadly sickness was stealing. He could not stand. They carried him—these rough strong men, so gently—with his friends crowding about him, to the nearest surgeon's. Everybody was sympathetic; every one interested. But Harry Muir's head had sunk upon his breast, and the light had gone from his eyes. He was conscious of nothing but pain.

The accident was a serious one ; his leg was broken.

## CHAPTER II.

“He sent me hither, stranger as I am,  
To tell this story.”

AS YOU LIKE IT.

“CUTHBERT,” said Richard Buchanan, “do, like a good fellow, go and tell his wife.”

“Do you not see, man, that a stranger would alarm her more? Why make me the messenger? You say she knows you, Dick.”

“Ay, she knows him,” said the second brother, “but she does not know him for any good. You see, Cuthbert, Dick’s always enticing poor Muir away—as he

did to-night—and the wife wouldn't flatter him if he went up now."

"I don't care a straw for the wife," said Richard angrily. "It's yon grim sister Martha, and that white-faced monkey of a girl. I say, Cuthbert—you needn't go in, and they don't know you—do go before and tell them he's coming. I'll come up with him myself in the noddy—just to oblige me, Cuthbert, will you go?"

"He lives in Port Dundas-road, it's not very far. John will show you where it is," urged Alick.

Cuthbert consented to go; and the obstreperous John was very much subdued, and very ready to accompany his cousin to poor Muir's house. It was now nearly ten o'clock. The young men were all greatly concerned, and in an inner room poor Harry was getting his leg examined, and looking so deadly sick and pale as to alarm both surgeon and friends. It was his temperament, so finely organized,

as to feel either pain or pleasure far more exquisitely than is the common lot.

“What will you say to them? Man, Cuthbert, are you not feared?” asked John.

“Why should I be feared? I am very sorry for her, poor woman—but is she such a fury, this wife?”

“It’s not the wife, it’s his eldest sister. Dick went home with Muir one night when he was’nt quite able to take care of himself, and I can tell you Dick was feared.”

“Dick was to blame—I do not feel that I am,” said Charteris; “but why was he afraid?—did she say so much to him?”

“She didn’t say anything to him; but you know they say she’s awful passionate, and she’s a great deal older than Harry; and she’s just been like his mother. They’re always so strict, these old maids—and Miss Muir’s an old maid.”

“Wait, then, till I see, John,” said Cuthbert; “don’t try to intimidate me.”

“ Yonder’s the house,” said John.

They had just passed a great quarry, across which the dome of some large building loomed dark against the sky. Then there was a field raised high above the road, with green grass waving over the copestone of a high wall, and at the end of the field stood a solitary house. A house of some pretension, for it boasted its street-door, and was “ self-contained ;” and albeit the ground-floor on either side was occupied by two not very ambitious shops, the upper flat looked substantial and respectable, although decayed.

They were on the opposite side—the street was very quiet, and their steps and voices echoed through it, so clearly that the loud John sank into whispering and felt himself guilty. The light of a very pale moon was shining into one of the windows. Looking up, Cuthbert saw some one watching them—eagerly pressing against the dark dull panes ; as they

crossed the street, the face suddenly disappeared.

“That’s one of them,” whispered John. “Isn’t it awful that a poor fellow can’t be out a little late, but these women are watching for him that way?”

Cuthbert did not answer. He was thinking of “these women,” and of their watching, rather than of the poor fellow who was the object of it.

They had not time to knock, when the door was opened wide to them, and a pale girl’s face looked out eagerly. She shrank back at once with a look of blank disappointment which touched Cuthbert’s heart, “I—I beg your pardon—I thought it was my brother.”

“Your brother will be here very soon. He has done a very brave thing to-night, and has had a slight accident in consequence. I beg you will not be alarmed,” said Cuthbert hastily.

“Oh! come in, sir, come in,” said the

young sister. "A very brave thing." She repeated it again and again, under her breath.

"There's the noddy," whispered John, as he lingered behind. "I'll wait and help him in."

The door admitted into a long paved passage, terminating in a little damp "green." John Buchanan remained at the door, while Cuthbert followed the steps of his eager conductor, through the passage, and up an "outside stair," into the house. She seemed very eager, and only looking round to see that he followed her, ran into a little parlour.

"Harry is coming. He has been helping somebody, and has hurt himself, Martha; the gentleman will tell you," exclaimed poor Harry's anxious advocate, placing herself beside the chair where sat a tall faded woman, sternly composed and quiet.

"Is Harry hurt?" cried another younger

and prettier person, who occupied the seat of honour by the fireside.

“He has done a very brave thing;” Cuthbert heard it whispered earnestly, into the elder sister’s ear.

He told them the story. The little wife was excited and nervous—she began to cry. The sister Martha sat firmly in her chair, her stern face moved and melting. The younger girl stood behind, with her arm round her sister, and her bright tearful face turned towards Charteris. “Our Harry—our poor Harry! it was this that kept him, Martha—and he saved the child.”

“What shall we do? Will he be lame?” sobbed the little wife.

The grave Martha suddenly rose from her chair as the faint sound of wheels reached them. “He is here. Rose, make the room ready for him, poor fellow. Do not let him see you crying, Agnes. Come to the door, and meet him.”



They went away hastily, leaving Charteris still in the room. Rose vanished by another door into an inner apartment. They were overmuch excited and anxious to remember the courtesy due to a stranger; and the stranger, for his part, was too much interested to leave them until he had seen how the sufferer bore his removal.

“Rose,” said a very small voice, “has Harry come home?—Rose!” Charteris looked round him a good deal puzzled, for there was no visible owner of the little voice. There certainly was a cradle in a corner, but nothing able to speak could inhabit that.

“Rose!”

There was no answer. Then there followed a faint rustling, and then a third door opened, and a little head in a white nightcap, looked out with a pair of bewildered dark eyes, and suddenly shrank in again, when it found the room in posses-

sion of a stranger. The stranger smiled at his own somewhat strange position, and began to move towards the door—but suddenly the cradle gave sound of life, and a lusty baby voice began to cry. They were carrying the baby's father then, into the house. The good-humoured Cuthbert rocked the cradle.

Poor Harry was still very pale, though the surgeon who accompanied him was as tender of him as the most delicate nurse, and the strong young arms of the Buchanans carried the patient like a child. *They* made their escape immediately, however,—but divided between sympathy for the family, and a consciousness of his own somewhat ridiculous position, Cuthbert stood at his post, rocking the refractory cradle. They all passed into the inner apartment. He was alone again.

It was a very plain parlour, and various articles of feminine work were scattered about the room; some small garment for

the sleeping baby lay on the ground, where it had fallen from the young mother's hand; on the table, where Martha had been sitting, was a piece of fine embroidery, stretched on two small hoops which fitted closely into each other. She had been engaged in filling up the buds and blossoms of those embroidered flowers with a species of fine needlework, peculiar to Glasgow and its dependent provinces. Another hoop, and another piece of delicate work, remained where Rose had left it. The sisters of the poor clerk maintained themselves so.

The baby voice had ceased. Groans of low pain were coming from the inner room. Cuthbert felt that he did wrong to wait, and turned again towards the door—but just then Miss Muir entered the parlour.

“The doctor thinks he will do well,” said Martha. “To-night I can hardly thank you. But he is everything to us

all—poor Harry!—and to-night you will excuse us. We can think of nothing but himself. Come again, and let us thank you?”

“I will come in the morning,” said Cuthbert, “not to be thanked, but to hear how he is. Good night.”

She went with him to the door, gravely and calmly: when she had shut it upon him, she stood still, alone in the dark, to press her hands against her heart. Again—again!—so long she had hoped that this facile temper would be steadied, that this poor brilliant wandering star would be fixed in his proper orbit. So often, so drearily, as her hopes had sunk into that blank of pain. Poor Harry! it was all they could say of him. When others praised the gay wit, the happy temper, the quick intelligence, those to whom he was dearest, could only say, poor Harry! for the good and pleasant gifts he had, made the bitterness of their grief only the

deeper. Their pride in him aggravated their shame. Darkest and saddest of all domestic calamities these women, to whom he was so very dear, could not *trust* the man in whom all their hopes and wishes centred. He had not lost their affection—it seemed only the more surely to yearn over and cling to him, for his faults—but he had lost their confidence.

They could not believe him: they could not rely upon word or resolution of his. When Harry was an hour later than his usual time of home-coming, Martha grew rigid in her chair, her strong heart beating so loud that almost she could not hear those footsteps in the street for which she watched with silent eagerness; and the work fell from the hands of the young wife, and Rose stole away, pale and agitated, into the inner room, to watch at the window in the darkness; and even the little sister—the child—was moved with the indefinite dread and melancholy

which is the grief of childhood. There were many grave people who would have smiled at poor Harry's sins, and counted them light and venial, but so did not these.

To lose confidence in those who are most dear to us, to be able no longer to trust word or vow—it is the climax of womanish misery,—a calamity terrible to bear !

And Martha Muir, under this discipline, was growing old. Morning after morning there had been a rebound of eager hope, only to be utterly cast down when the night fell. She had had something of the mother's pride in him—had transferred to Harry the natural ambition, the eager hopes and wishes, which for herself had all faded with her fading prime—and now, she who had so strong a will, so resolute a mind, to see this man with all his gifts, and the free scope he had to exercise them, sinking, falling, tarnishing with

mean sins, the lustre and glory of his youth. Poor Harry! his stern sad sister said nothing more of blame—but as she turned again along the damp passage, and up the stairs, the heart within her sank into the depths. She pressed her hands upon it. Strange sympathy between the frame and the spirit, which makes it no image to say that there is a weight upon the heart!

“Martha, has Harry come home,” said the little sister, standing in her white night-dress at the door of the small bed-closet which opened from their parlour. The child’s eyes were bright and wide open, as if, in her compulsory solitude in the closet, she had been steadily fixing them to keep herself awake. “When I looked out I saw a gentleman. And where’s Rose and Agnes, Martha. Is Harry no weel?”

“You must go to bed, Violet,” said Martha. “Poor Harry has got a broken



leg. He was in the Trongate to-night with the Buchanans, and saved a child's life—but you cannot see him to-night—the doctor is with him just now, poor fellow; go to bed—you shall see him to-morrow."

Little Violet began to cry, and the dark bewildered wide open eyes looked up inquiringly into Martha's face. Violet knew that Harry did not need to be in the Trongate with the Buchanans, and that they all waited for him very long before they would take their humble cup of tea.

"He will not be able to go out for a long time, Violet—and he saved the bairn's life," said Martha, as she put her little sister into the dark closet bed, which she herself and Rose shared, "and you must not cry—rather be thankful that the little boy's mother has not lost him, Lettie, and ask God to bless poor Harry—poor Harry! do you know you should always think of him, Violet, when you pray?"



“And so I do, Martha,” said little Violet, looking up through her tears as she clung to her elder sister, the only mother she had ever known.

“Then you must let me go to him now, poor fellow,” said Martha. “Hush! he will hear you crying—lie still, Lettie, and fall asleep.”

One of Violet’s tears rested on Martha’s faded cheek—other tears came as she wiped it away. “Poor bairn—poor bairn,” said the elder sister, “I might be her mother—and so I am.”

When she entered the sick-room, the surgeon was just preparing to leave it. He had set the broken bone, and done all that could be done to give his patient ease. Harry, greatly exhausted, and deadly pale, was lying quiet, not strong enough to express even his suffering by more than a faint groan—and his wife and Rose watched anxiously beside him. But Harry’s mind was very much at ease, and tranquil. His

accident covered triumphantly any error he had committed, and his anxious attendants were tranquil and satisfied too—for who could think of Harry's fault or weakness, when Harry's generous bravery had brought him so much pain. They were content to believe—and they did believe, poor eager loving hearts ! that no one else could have been so daring—no one else had so little thought of personal safety—and were saying, with tears in their eyes, what a providence it was for the child and its mother, that “our Harry,” and no other, was there to rescue it.

“ I am to sit up with him, Martha,” said the little wife.

“ But there is the baby, Agnes,” said Rose ; “ you must let me sit up with Harry.”

“ You must go away, both of you, and sleep,” said Martha. “ Hush, speak low ! I cannot trust any of you, bairns—I must watch him myself. No, little matron, not

you. I must take care of my boy myself—my poor Harry !”

These words so often said—expressing so much love, so much grief—they were echoed in the hearts of all.

Poor Harry ! but his conscience did not smite him to-night : only his heart melted into tenderness for those who were so very tender of him, and involuntarily there came into his mind, gentle thoughts of all he would do for them, when he was well again ; for Harry never feared for himself.

They left his wife with him for a short time, and returned to the fireside of the little parlour—it was Saturday night, and some of their delicate work had to be finished, if possible, before the twelve o'clock bell should begin the Sabbath-day.

They were but lodgers in this house. The mistress of it, a decayed widow—strong, in her ancient gentility—had three daughters, who maintained them-

selves and an idle brother by the same work which occupied the Muirs. The collars and cuffs and handkerchiefs of richer women, embroidered by other workers, principally in Ayr and Ayrshire, were given out at warehouses in Glasgow, to the Muirs and Rodgers, and multitudes of other such, to be “opened,” as they called it—which “opening” meant filling up the centre of the embroidered flowers with delicate open-work in a variety of “stitches” innumerable. Very expert, and very industrious workers at this, could, in busy times, earn as much as ten weekly shillings—and thus it was that Martha and Rose Muir supported themselves and their little sister, and were no burden on the scanty means of Harry.

“Well, Martha?” said Rose, breathlessly, as the door of the inner room closed upon the little wife.

Martha could not lift up her eyes to meet her sister’s. “Well, my dear?”

“ I am sure,” said Rose, “ I am sure, you are quite satisfied to-night.”

“ Surely, surely,” said the less hopeful sister—a sigh bursting, in spite of her, out of her heavy heart.

“ Surely, surely—what do you mean, Martha?” said the dissatisfied Rose. “ Poor Harry! you are surely pleased with him to-night.”

“ I said so, Rose,” said Martha. “ Poor Harry !”

The younger sister did not speak for a moment—then she put her work away and covered her face with her hands.

“ You will never trust him—you will never trust Harry, Martha !”

Martha sighed. “ I will trust God, Rose.”

Rose Muir dried her eyes, and took up her work again—there was nothing to be said after that.

Martha was rocking the cradle softly with her foot; and Martha, mother-like,

was fain to divert the younger heart, and make it lighter than her own. "Our poor wee Harry," she said with a smile. "Did you see what a strange nurse he had to-night?"

"Was it the gentleman?" said Rose; "did you say anything to him, Martha—he would think us very ungrateful."

"I can trust the person who rocks our cradle," said Martha. "He is coming back to-morrow to be thanked."

"On Sabbath-day!"

"It is charity to come to Harry," said Martha. "Poor Harry, how every one likes him!"

Their eyes were becoming wet again—it was a relief to hear a quiet knock at the parlour door.

The visitor was the younger Miss Rodger—a large, soft, clumsy, good-humoured girl, with a pleasant comely face. She wore a broken-down faded gown, which had once been very gay, and a little wool-

len shawl, put on unevenly, over her plump shoulders, and her hair in its enclosure of curl-papers for the night; ends of thread were clinging to the fringes of the shawl, and the young lady was tugging it over her shoulders, conscious of deficiencies below; but the good-humoured offer to "take the wean," or do anything that might be needed, covered the eccentricities of Miss Aggie's general house dress and appearance. The precious child was not entrusted to her, but the hoyden's visit enlivened the sisters, and immediately after, they finished their work, and Martha saw Rose and Agnes prepare for rest, and then took her own place noiselessly by her brother's bedside.

## CHAPTER III.

“How still and peaceful is the Sabbath morn!—  
The pale mechanic now has room to breathe.”

GRAHAM.

EARLY on the following morning, Cuthbert Charteris, after a long walk from his uncle's house, presented himself at Harry Muir's door. The street was very still and Sabbath-like. Some young workmen, in suits of snowy moleskin, stood grouped about the corner of the Cowcaddens, enjoying the sunshine, and some few who were of the more respectable Church-going class, and could not spend the after-part of the day in such a manner, were return-



ing from early walks. There were very few shadows, however, to break the quiet undisturbed sunshine of the usually crowded street.

The blinds were all drawn down in Mrs. Rodger's respectable house—all except one in the little parlour of the Muirs. The outer door stood ajar—it was generally so during the day—and as Cuthbert proceeded up the stairs, the grave doleful voice of some one reading aloud struck on his ear. This, and the closely-veiled windows, made him somewhat apprehensive—and he quickened his pace in solicitude for the sufferer.

The door of the house was opened to him by a little slipshod pseudo-Irish girl, who held the very unenviable situation of servant to Mrs. Rodger. The door opened into a large airy lobby, at the further end of which was Harry Muir's little parlour; but Cuthbert's attention was drawn to another open door, through which he had

a glimpse of a large kitchen, with various figures, in strange dishabille, pursuing various occupations in it—one engaged about her toilette—one preparing breakfast—and another trying to smooth out with her hands the obstinate wrinkles of a green silk gown. They were talking without restraint, and moving about continually, while, at a large deal table near the window, with her back turned to the open door, sat a tall old woman, in a widow's cap, with a volume of sermons in her hand, reading aloud. The voice was most funereal and monotonous, the apartment darkened by the blind which quite covered the window. One of the daughters caught a glimpse of the stranger, and hastily closed the door. Cuthbert turned to the little parlour with a puzzled smile.

The room was small, and furnished with a faded carpet, an old sofa, half-a-dozen ponderous mahogany chairs, and

the cradle which Cuthbert had rocked the previous night. The little table was covered with a white table-cloth, and glancing with cups and saucers; and by the side of the little clear fire the kettle was singing merrily. Rose, in her Sabbath dress of brown merino, stood at the window with the baby. Martha, newly relieved from her long night's vigil in the sick room, was cutting bread and butter at the table; and in the arm-chair, with great enjoyment of the dignity, sat Violet, her attention divided between the psalm she was learning, and the little handsome feet in their snowy-white wool-len stockings and patent-leather shoes, which she daintily rested upon the fender. As Cuthbert entered the room, the young wife looked out from the door of the inner apartment, with her finger on her lip, to telegraph that Harry had fallen asleep. They were all of that sanguine mood and temperament which springs up new with

the light of the morning, and even on the pale dark face of Martha there were hopeful smiles.

“The surgeon has been here already,” she said, “and Harry is not suffering so much as we feared he should. The symptoms are all favourable, and we may hope that it will have no ill results : the doctor says that he will not be lame, poor fellow; and now, Mr. Charteris, we have to thank you for preparing us so gently last night for the accident. It was very kind—very kind—to take so disagreeable an office on yourself, and not to leave it to your cousins.”

“I can assure you they were sincerely grieved,” said Cuthbert, “and are very anxious about your brother.”

“They are only lads,” said Martha, quietly, “and have not the consideration. We could not trust youths like them, as we can trust a more mature judgment. For our own sakes, I am very glad, Mr.

Charteris, that *you* saw poor Harry's accident, and the cause of it—poor Harry!"

Cuthbert Charteris was very much interested—so much so, that it did not occur to him what a very unsuitable time he had chosen for his visit—nor that the teapot on one side of the old-fashioned grate was beginning to puff a faint intimation that it had been left there too long, and that the kettle on the other was boiling away. It was very nearly ten o'clock, and, in a few minutes, the Church-going bells would ring forth their summons. Rose began to look embarrassed, and to dread being too late for Church; but the gentleman was talking to the baby and to Martha, and steadily kept his place.

At last Rose, listening in terror for the first notes of the bell, shyly suggested to Martha that, perhaps, Mr. Charteris had not breakfasted.

But Mr. Charteris had breakfasted; and as Martha lifted the puffing teapot

from the place which was too hot for it, and bade Violet lay down her psalm-book, and began to fill the cups, Mr. Charteris drew his seat into the window, and kept possession. He had settled himself already quite on the footing of an old friend, and began to feel it very pleasant to sit there, looking out on the fresh wintry sunshine, and the clean humble families who began to set out in little bands for the far-away old parish Churches of Glasgow—not choosing to content themselves with the Chapel-of-ease, politely called St. George's-in-the-Fields—profanely, the Black Quarry. There were a few such in this immediate neighbourhood, who went to the Barony, and the Tron and High Churches, as old residents, and rather looked down upon the new. To look out on these—the mechanic father and thrifty mother, and group of home-spun children, embellished, perhaps, with a well-dressed daughter, working in

the mills, and making money—and to look in again upon the little bright breakfast-table, and the three sisters—the mature, grave, elder woman—the Rose, in the flush of her fairest years, half-blown—the little, shy, dark-eyed child—Mr. Charteris felt himself very comfortable.

They had to speak very low, for Agnes stole to the door of the inner room now and then, to lay her finger on her lips again, and telegraph the urgent necessity for silence—and speaking in half whispers makes even indifferent conversation look confidential. The friendship waxed apace—very rarely did such a man as Charteris come within sight or knowledge of this family. The atmosphere of commerce is rarely literary—in their class they had read of the fully equipped intellectual man, but had met him never.

They themselves were of an order peculiar to no class, but scattered through all; without any education worth speaking of,



except the two plain indispensable faculties of reading and writing, Harry Muir and his sisters, knowing nothing of the world, had unconsciously reached at and attained the higher society which the world of books and imagination opens to delicate minds. They were not aware that their own taste was unusually refined, or their own intellect more cultivated than their fellows, but they were at once sensible of Cuthbert's superiority, and hailed it with eager regard—not without a little involuntary pride either, to find that this, almost the most highly cultivated person they had ever met, was, after all, only equal to themselves.

There are the bells, echoing one after another, through the now populous streets. Mrs. McGarvie, from the little shop below, has locked her door, and issues forth, with her good man, who is a rope-maker and deacon of his trade, to the Barony Kirk, with Rab, her large good-humoured red-



haired son, and her little pretty daughter Ellen, a worker in the mill, following in her train ; and with great dignity, in green silk gowns and tippets of fur, Miss Jeanie and Miss Aggie Rodger sail from the door, bound for the Relief Meeting-house, while Rose Muir ties on Violet's neat bonnet, and arranges her little cloak, and glides away herself to complete her own dress, wondering, with a little flutter, what Mr. Charteris will do now.

Mr. Charteris very speedily decided the question, for he stood waiting, with his hat in his hand, when Rose entered the parlour, cloaked and bonneted. Mr. Charteris had never heard Dr. Jamieson. He thought, if the young ladies would permit him, he should be glad to walk with them to the Church.

And the young ladies did permit him, with much shy good will, and Mr. Charteris listened to Dr. Jamieson's fine voice and polished sentences with great edifica-

tion. The Doctor was a man in his prime, bland and dignified, and knew all the economics of sermon-writing, and that famous art of domestic wisdom which makes a little go a great way ; nevertheless, Mr. Charteris turned back some distance on the road, when the service was ended, to animadvert upon the Doctor, and to get up a very pretty little controversy with Rose, who, as in duty bound, refused to hear a word in detriment of her minister, so that the discussion carried Mr. Charteris back again to the very door, and gave him another prospect of the Misses Rodger's green silk gowns, at sight of which, raising his hat, to the great admiration of Violet, Mr. Charteris turned reluctantly away.

## CHAPTER IV.

“For the sweet Spring that bringeth joy to all,  
Frets the pale sufferer bound to painful couch,  
Or chamber dim and still.”

THE following evening was signalised in the quiet house of Mr. Buchanan, by such a discussion as never before startled its respectable echoes. Cuthbert Charteris, lawless as Ishmael, lifted his hand against every man, and refused to confess himself worsted, though George Buchanan and Sons, as a firm, and as individuals, not to speak of Adam Smith, and the law of supply and demand, were set in battle array against him.

The subject of controversy was one which would have made the blood boil with indignation and wrath in the veins of Harry Muir, being nothing less, indeed, for a starting-point, than his salary, which the advocate, looking on the matter in a theoretical point of view, and not admitting into his consideration the "everybody-else" whose practice had so large a share in forming the opinions of his cousins, condemned very strongly and clearly, to the great wrath of Richard and Alick, and the half-convinced irritation of their father, as quite an unfair and inadequate remuneration for the full time and labours of an—at least partially—educated man. Cuthbert had not at all a commercial mind, and the natural right and justice continually overshadowed with him the laws of supply and demand. It was impossible to persuade him, that any law required of him a systematic wrong, nor that a man's own personal conscience had nothing to do

with his position as an employer of other men. Cuthbert would not be convinced—neither would Dick and Alick—and Mr. Buchanan himself, head of the firm and the house, took up his candle abruptly and went off, in some excitement, to his own apartment, there to sleep upon sundry propositions which had entered, like arrows, sharp and irritating, into a mind which would hear reason, whether its possessor chose or no.

Cuthbert remained some weeks in Glasgow—he had little practice to neglect at home, and the western magnates made much of him, greatly esteeming in their hearts the metropolitan “rank” so very different from their own, which they affected to despise;—and the intercourse which he had with the Muirs, already bore a character of friendliness and confidence, such as not unusually elevates an acquaintance formed at some family crisis, into a warm and lasting friendship. But Char-

teris at length was going home, and, not without many jibes from his young cousins, about the strange attraction which drew him so often to visit the invalid, he set out from the office for the last time to see Harry Muir.

Very different is the look which this bustling street bears in its every-day occupation from the Sabbath quietness which hushes all its voices. Great carts are constantly passing with ostentatious din and clamour, as if proud of their load—light unburdened ones, flying up and down, with the driver perched on his little movable seat, and the end of the whip floating like a streamer over his horse's head—while now and then wearied travelling people come slowly down, carrying box and carpet bag, fresh from the tedious journeys of the canal. Violet Muir stands at the door of the little room wherein Mrs. McGarvie lives, and eats, and sells butter, brose-meal, and “speldrens,” lovingly con-

versing with Tiger, Mrs. McGarvie's great ferocious, sinister-looking dog. He is by no means prepossessing, this friend of Violet's, and has a wiry yellow coat, and a head largely developed in the animal parts, and small in the intellectual, with a fiery red truculent eye;—yet, nevertheless, he is Violet's friend, and the little girl like the fairy Titania, has beauty enough in her own eyes and heart to glorify her friend withal—so Tiger is sufficiently adorned.

Shaking hands kindly in passing, and patting the little shy head which drooped under his eye, Cuthbert went up stairs through the always open door to the now familiar parlour. Harry was rapidly recovering; he had been removed from his room for the first time to-day, and now lay on the sofa, while his little wife gaily danced about the crowing baby before him. They made a pretty group, as Agnes leaned over the great arm chair, and little

Harry put forth his dimpled hand to stroke his father's cheek, but there was a little peevishness and impatience in the face which the rosy child's fingers passed over so lightly. The invalid was slightly querulous this morning.

"Just the time of all the year that I enjoy most," said Harry, "and to be shut up here now ! It tries a man's patience—open the window, Rose."

"Rose got cold last night, when you had the window open," said Agnes with humility, "and the baby is not well—it may hurt yourself too, Harry."

"Nonsense. Rose can sit somewhere else. Open the window."

"Surely, if you wish it, Harry," said Rose promptly.

The day was bright, but cold, and the wind blew in, with a sudden gust, through the opened window, tossing poor Rose's hair about her face, and shaking her with a momentary shiver, but saying nothing,



she withdrew quietly to a corner and resumed her work. Rose had never ventured all her life to dispute any one of Harry's caprices.

"One likes to have a glance at the world again," said Harry, raising himself on his pillows. "Yonder comes the postman, Agnes—see, he is holding up a letter—run, and get it, Rose; and yonder is Rab McGarvie, carrying a peck of brose-meal to somebody, and little Maggie McGillivray clipping at the door. It is pleasant to see them all, and this wind, how fresh and wholesome it is. Lift the window a little more, Martha—just for a moment."

"It is very cold, Harry," pleaded the little wife.

"Nonsense," repeated Harry, "don't you think it is quite warm for the season, Mr. Charteris. Martha!"

Martha rose with sudden impatience, threw down her work, and rapidly closed

the window. She did not speak, but Cuthbert saw a strange combination of the strongly-marked lines on her forehead, and a close compression of her lips, which did not look very peaceable. The act itself was not very peaceable certainly, but there was a suppressed passion in her look and manner, which had a singular effect upon the stranger.

Harry Muir said nothing, but he threw himself back upon the pillow, sullen and offended. There was a scared timid expression on the face of the young wife, and little Violet glided up behind Martha, and laid her hand upon her sister's shoulder in childish deprecation.

Just then Rose entered with the letter. "It is from Ayr, from my uncle," she said. "Shall I open it, Harry?"

"As you please," said Harry, sulkily.

She cast a hurried glance round the room, pausing for a moment with a searching, inquisitive, painful look, as her eye

fell on Martha. Then she came to her brother's side, and laid her hand softly with a half caress upon his arm.

"Shall I read what my uncle says, Harry, for everybody's benefit? Uncle Sandy always writes to the whole of us, you know."

There was no answer. Cuthbert took up his hat, and rose with embarrassment. The scene was becoming painful.

"You are not going away, Mr. Charteris," said Agnes, anxiously; "pray don't go away so soon, when this is your last visit too; and I am sure Harry has never had an opportunity before to thank you for your kindness, nor indeed any of us, except Martha. Martha had to make all our thanks."

"Did you, Martha?" asked Rose.

Cuthbert turned away his head. He did not wish them to think that he saw through those little palpable affectionate

artifices of theirs to heal the new-made breach.

“Martha!” repeated Rose, under her breath.

And Cuthbert looked stealthily at this passionate face. The rigid lines were relaxing slowly; the muscles of the mouth moving and trembling; fierce and strong anger melting into inexpressible tenderness and sorrow. Vain anger, bootless yearnings, which might spend their strength for ages, like the great sea upon the sand, and never change its form.

“Mr. Charteris, I fear, got but few thanks from me,” said Martha, slowly; “but Mr. Charteris has seen us since, and knows that to do kindness to Harry is to have the greatest gratitude we can feel.”

There was another pause, and the stranger could easily perceive that, facile as Harry was elsewhere, he liked to reign at home, and did not very readily forgive

any resistance to his will. He had, indeed, been very querulous and unreasonable this morning, and this was only the climax of a series of petty selfishnesses which had exhausted Martha's powers of long-suffering.

"Shall we see you soon in Glasgow again," asked Harry, at length, turning once more to Cuthbert.

"In a few weeks, perhaps ; I may have some business," said Cuthbert, with embarrassment. "You will be strong again then, I hope. My uncle commissions me to say that you must take full time to recover, and not hurry to the office too soon."

"Mr. Buchanan is always very kind," said Agnes.

"Is he?" said Cuthbert, smiling, "scarcely kind enough, I am disposed to think ; but I believe it is not the inclination that is defective in my uncle. These trammels of ordinary usage—doing as other people do—have a great effect upon

men occupied as he is. He does not take time to judge for himself, and exercise his own generosity and justice."

Cuthbert concluded in some haste. Quite consistent as this apology was with his own previous thoughts, it suddenly occurred to him that it was quite irrelevant and unnecessary here.

"Mr. Buchanan has done perfect justice to Harry, I fancy," said Martha Muir, raising her thin figure from its habitual stoop, and speaking in a tone of cold *hauteur*, which, like the passion, revealed a new phase of her character to Cuthbert, who watched her with interest; "and as for generosity, Mr. Charteris, your uncle seems by no means deficient where there is any scope for that. I see his name often in the papers. You judge Mr. Buchanan hardly."

Cuthbert comprehended, and was silent. Between the rich man's indifference and the poor man's pride it was difficult to

steer ; and Richard and Alick Buchanan were not more haughtily offended at the accusation of treating their clerks unfairly than was Harry Muir's sister at the suggestion that his employer's generosity could reach him.

“ This poor leg of mine is nearly a month old now,” said Harry, “ and except some grave visits from Gilchrist, no one has ever taken the trouble to inquire for me. I suppose your cousins are more pleasantly occupied.”

“ I rather think Dick is afraid,” said Cuthbert.

He was singularly unfortunate in his choice of subjects. A little red spot began to burn on Harry's cheek ; poor fellow, he wanted to be angry.

“ Afraid !”

“ I mean, they would rather not encounter the ladies till you are quite recovered. Persuading you to go with them, you know, burdens their conscience, be-



cause it exposed you to this accident. Not, of course, that any one was to blame," said Cuthbert, hurriedly, and with some confusion.

"Their conscience is over scrupulous," said Harry, looking round him with a smile of defiance. "I went with them for my own pleasure; so far as there is any blame it is entirely mine."

Poor Harry!—weak and yielding as the willow in the wind, there was no blame to which he was so nervously susceptible as this—no accusation which he denied and defied with so much anger.

Cuthbert turned again to the window. Just before him, in a half-built street, which struck off at right angles from the road to Port Dundas, Maggie McGillivray sat in the cold sunshine on the step of her mother's door, "clipping,"\* with a web

\* Another feminine craft peculiar to the "west country," where many young girls, of a class inferior to the workers of embroidery and opening, are employed to clip the loose threads from webs of worked muslin.



of tamboured muslin on her knee and scissors in her hand. Maggie, as Violet Muir could have testified, was only sixteen, though her "clipping" had helped the family income for several years, and her own money had purchased for her the little bright red tartan shawl which just covered her stout shoulders, but left her arms unincumbered and her hands free. On the half-paved road before her stood a mill-girl, with whom work was "slack," and who had spent a full hour this morning elaborating the beautiful plaits and braids of her crisped hair. This young lady, with much gesture and many superlatives, was describing to the busy little worker an itinerant show which had fixed its temporary quarters at Port Dundas, wherein there was a giant and a dwarf, a beautiful lady who danced, and a boy who had pink eyes, and which she herself was on the way to see; but Maggie clipped and shook her head, unfolding the web, to

show her tempter how much had to be done before one o'clock, when she must lay it by, to take up the pitcher with her father's broth, and carry to him his wholesome dinner ; and when the idler sauntered on, to seek some less scrupulous companion, Maggie returned to her labour with such alacrity, that Cuthbert fancied he could almost hear the sound of the shears, and the loud clear lilt of the " Learig," to which they kept time.

Yet Maggie McGillivray was only a humble little girl, while Harry Muir, in his way, was an accomplished man. Cuthbert looked back upon the young man's fine intelligent face, on which the proud look of defiance still lingered, with a sigh of pity and regret—not so would *he* have overcome the temptation.

## CHAPTER V.

“ She had such a nature,  
You would have thought some fairy, 'ware o' th' hour,  
When out of heaven came a young soul, predestined  
For a King's heir, to make a conqueror of him  
Had, by some strange and wondrous art, diverted  
The new-born spirit from its proper course,  
And hid it in the form of a poor maiden ;  
Leaving the princely weakling in his cradle,  
Shorn of the fate that waited him : the other  
Chafing at its caged limits all its days——”

OLD PLAY.

A SELF-WILLED, proud, ambitious woman, with a strong, clear, bold intellect, a passionate temper, and vehement feelings, Martha Muir had been born. So much education as she had, tended all to reduce her to the due humility of poverty and

womanhood, but surrounded always by placid natures, who never fully comprehended the stormy spirit with which they had to deal, Martha, dwelling alone, and hiding in her own heart the secret aspirations which no one round her could have understood, remained as proud, as self-willed, and as ambitious as she had been born.

For hers were not the hopes and fancies common, as people say, to youthful women. Advantages of appearance she had never possessed, and the children who were growing up at her feet absorbed all the passionate affections of their grave sister; but Martha's hopes were visions of unmitigated ambition, eager to work out for itself a future worthy of its own bold spirit—for it was not of windfalls, or happy chances, or of fortune to be bestowed on her by another, but of that ladder “to which the climber upward turns his face,” that the solitary woman dreamed.

To raise them—these children—to that indefinite rank and honour which exists in the fancy of the young who are poor—to win for them exemption from those carking cares amid which her own youth, a strong plant, had grown green and flourished. Such hopes were strong in the heart of the passionate girl when people round her thought her only a child; and when darker necessities came—when following many little pilgrims, the father and the mother went away, leaving her the head of the sadly diminished family, her strong desire, intensified by great grief, possessed her like a fiery tormenting spirit. She was then a woman of only twenty years, while Harry was but thirteen; and Martha prayed in an agony for means—only means, to let her strong energies forth and labour for her children: but the means never came—how could they? and all she could do in her passion

of ambitious love was to toil day and night for their bread.

No one of all her friends knew how to deal with Martha—so that her impatient soul knew no discipline except the inevitable restraints of poverty, and these, if they humble the pride, are but spurs to the eager fancy, burning to escape from their power. Through all the years of romance the wish and hope to do somewhat, had filled Martha's mind with visions; but then came those slow, gradual, steady years, wherein the light of common day began to blot out the radiant mists of the morning, and as her hopes fell one by one, and one by one the months lengthened, filled with the tedious labour which gave such scope for thought, bitterness came in like deep waters into the fierce heart, which rendered all its strength to that might of disappointment, and wrestled with itself like a caged eagle. To find that after

aspiring to do all, one can do nothing—that soaring in fancy into the broad firmament, in the body one must condescend to all the meanest and smallest cares of daily life—to dream of unknown heights to be attained, and to find instead that by the slow toil of every long uninteresting day one must labour for daily bread—it is not wonderful that the awaking was bitter; and all the more, because in both the dream and the awaking she was uncomprehended and alone.

They all lay dead these hopes of her strange solitary youth—but as they died others rose. This boy, in whom the young beautiful life rose with a grace which she knew it never had in herself—what might he not do? and so she set herself to train him. The old lore that is in all hearts, of the brave and of the great, the histories of Scripture, which live for ever; all that God has recorded for us of his servants' stout lives, and much that men have written

in lesser records. The lonely young woman, feeling herself grave and old among her neighbours, poured all her vehement heart into the glowing intelligence of the boy. She began to think it well that those chimeras of her own had fallen like withered leaves to enrich the soil—and in him should be the glorious spring.

How was it now? The deep red flush which sometimes burned on Martha's cheek, the anger which only one of so dear regard could awaken, and sadder still, the utter heaviness with which her heart sank in the rebound, proclaimed the end of her second harvest. The first time she had sowed in proud wilfulness—it was meet she should reap disappointment; but the second seed-time had been in hope more Christianlike, and with strong crying for the sunshine and the dew—the wonderful sunshine and dew of high heaven, which had never fallen upon her seed.

It seemed that her fate had been born



with her. The proud and passionate temper to be thwarted and crossed at every turn—the vehement ambitious mind, to be disgraced and humbled—and with those arrows in her heart, she was now fighting with herself a greater fight than she had ever hazarded before, subduing herself to herself, and to the Higher One, who thus painfully had brought back the rebel soul to His allegiance. It was hard to subdue the old passion—the old pride—but she had begun to sanctify her contest now, when it had come to the bitterest.

No other trial could have been so hard to her as this; it struck at her very life. Misfortunes against which she could struggle would have been happy discipline to Martha, but to look on helplessly while these elements of ruin were developing in the life of her brother; to stand by and see him fall lower and lower into the poor and petty sins which she despised—to watch the slow coming of disgrace and wretched-

ness which she could not lift a finger to avert—who can wonder that the proud spirit was chafed into passions of fierce anger sometimes, and sometimes into very despair; but Martha never spoke of what she suffered—she only said “Poor Harry!”

“Shall I read my uncle’s letter now?” asked Rose, when Cuthbert was gone.

“Surely,” said Harry, whom some slight incident had restored to perfect good-humour. “Surely, Rosie, let us hear what the old man says.”

“I write this to let you know that I am quite well,” read Rose, “though a little troubled with the rheumatism in my right arm, which always comes on about the turn of the year, as you will all mind; and I am very sorry to hear of Harry’s accident; but there is less matter for lamentation, it being gotten in a good way, as I have no doubt Martha will mind. The town crier, Sandy Proudfoot,

broke his leg at Hogmanay, and it's never mended yet; but I cannot see what better the daidling body had to expect, it being a thing well known, that when the accident was gotten, he was as he should not have been, which is a great comfort in respect of Harry. I hope all the rest of you are well and doing well, and desire to see some of you at Ayr as soon as ever it can be made convenient. If Violet is inclined to be delicate, send her out to me for a change. The guard of the coach would take good care of her, and I will pay her passage myself. I hope she is minding her lessons and learning to help the rest with the opening, and that Rose is eident, as the cottar says, and minds her duty duly, and that Harry is steady and 'grees with his wife. As for Martha, seeing she knows what is right, better than I can tell her, I have nothing to say, but that I hope she keeps up to the mark, which she knows, and has her own judgment in her

favour—of which, if she is sure, I know she will be feared for no other in the world. And so I remain, my dear bairns, your affectionate uncle—ALEXANDER MUIR.”

“What do you say, Agnes,” said Harry, “do we agree?”

The little wife smiled. “When you behave yourself, Harry,” she said, laying her child in the cradle.

“If we could manage it,” said Martha, “when Harry is able to walk, Agnes, I think you should go down together to see my uncle. You have never been in Ayr.”

Agnes looked up brightly. “And I should like so well to go; and it would do Harry so much good. But then, Martha, how can we afford it?”

Harry winced visibly. Some debts of his own, recklessly and foolishly incurred, had made the long-projected journey to Ayr impracticable a year ago; the fifteen pounds could do so little more than pro-

vide for the bare wants of the quarter ; and yet again there were other debts waiting for the next payment of salary. Poor Harry !

“ I have been thinking,” said Martha, quietly ; “ I see how we can manage, Agnes ; we shall only work the more busily, Rose and I, while you are away, and Harry will be the better of it. I see how we can do it. It will do Harry good to see my uncle and the little quiet house again.”

Harry felt that there was meaning in her voice. To dwell again under the humble roof where all her hopes for his young life had risen ; where she had nursed and tended the dawning mind within him, and laboured to lift his eyes, and teach him to look upward bravely, like a young eagle to the sun. Alas, poor Harry ! For this revival of the unstained hopes of youth, Martha was willing to toil all the harder at her tedious unceasing toil ; and he felt, almost for the first time,

how hopeless these hopes were. How different were his expectations and hers.

“It is a shame,” he said, abruptly, “for a rich man like Buchanan to keep us down so. We require a little relaxation, a little ease, as well as them; and I should like to know how it is possible we can get it on sixty pounds a year?”

“Peter McGillivray has only fourteen shillings a week,” said Rose.

“And what then?”

“He keeps a family on it, Harry; at least his wife does; but then she is very thrifty.”

“Thrifty! nonsense. Is not Agnes thrifty too? You are a foolish girl, Rose,” said her brother; “you think a few shillings is a great fortune. There now, a pound or two would take us comfortably down to my uncle’s; but how can we spare that, off the pittance they give me.”

Yet Harry remembered that his own private expenses—the little debts of which

his wife and sister knew nothing—amounted to more than that needful pound or two, and the remembrance brought a flush to his face and made him angry.

“There is a meanness attends this mercantile wealth,” he exclaimed hastily; “a want of thought and consideration of others. What are we clerks but the stuff these masters of ours are made of? and yet how they keep us down.”

“They were themselves kept down, and overcame it,” said Martha.

“Well, it is not a very noble art, the art of making money,” said Harry, with assumed carelessness. “Dick Buchanan and the rest of them are shallow fellows in spite of it all. And their father—he has made a fortune—but the honest man is no genius.”

“But it *is* a noble art to refuse to be kept down,” said the ambitious Martha, with a kindling of her eye. “I am ashamed to think that Mr. Buchanan or

any other ordinary person, *can* keep down my brother ; and he cannot, Harry. You have less perhaps than you ought to have now, but win more ; that is your refuge. And don't let us throw the responsibility on other people. We have only to answer for ourselves."

" Well, Martha," said Harry, looking up, " we have not much of the mammon of unrighteousness to answer for. I will tell my uncle you have grown charitable ; that is, if it be at all possible to get to Ayr."

" What do you think, Martha?" said Agnes, with some solicitude in her face.

" You must go ; that is all," said Martha.

The little wife was by no means self-opinionated. She had a great reverence for, and faith in, the decrees of Martha, and knew that what her grave sister resolved would be accomplished " some way," so she returned pleasantly to the cradle.



“ And *I* don’t want to go, Martha,” whispered little Violet, desiring to have her sacrifice appreciated. “ My uncle will give the money to Agnes, and I will stay at home and help you to open.”

“ But you would like to go, Lettie ?” said Rose.

“ No ; I would rather stay at home with Martha and you. I think, Martha,” whispered Violet again, “ that it will be fine to be our lane just for a wee while—when Agnes is with Harry.”

In the elder mind there was a response to the child’s thought—To know that Harry was safe, with the good uncle, and the anxious little wife to guard him, while yet they themselves were left a little while alone, freed from their constant anxiety, to rest and take breath for the future which remained, with all its unknown cares, before them. There was something in the thought which gave Martha relief, and yet oppressed her with a heavier sad-

ness ; but Agnes was already gay in anticipation, and eagerly discussing what she should take of her little wardrobe, and how many frocks for baby Harry—for Agnes was still only a girl, and the unusual pleasure filled her with wholesome natural delight—a good and happy contagion which soon spread itself in softened degrees over all the rest.

## CHAPTER VI.

“ He left me, wi’ his deein’ breath,  
A dwelling-house, and a’ that.”

OLD SONG.

“ I WANT a next of kin, Charteris,” said an Edinburgh W. S., entering the little office where Cuthbert sat, solemnly considering the morning’s paper, opposite an elbow-chair, which had very seldom been honoured by the presence of a client. “ I want a next of kin, and I can’t tell where to find him.”

The speaker was a young man about Cuthbert’s own age, who like himself had newly begun to encounter on his own behalf

the cares and responsibilities of business. They had come together through the training of the High School and College, and now were great friends and allies, furthering each others progress, by all means in their power.

“ Advertise,” said the laconic Cuthbert, from behind the folds of his newspaper.

“ Oh, oracle!” answered Mr. David Lindsay, throwing down a black crumpled “ *Times*,” which struck upon the fair broadsheet of “ *The Scotsman*,” and compelled the reader’s attention. “ And suppose I have advertised, and failed—what then?”

“ It’s a cold day, Davie,” responded the learned advocate. “ Sit down, Lord Lion, and tell me all about it.”

“ I say, Cuthbert, there’s a story,” said the W.S., mysteriously.

Cuthbert stirred the fire, and prepared to listen.

“ Up near the links of Forth, there is a gray old house called Allenders,” said

Lindsay, with some importance, "and in the house there dwells a family as your penetration will guess—or rather, dwelt a family—for they are now extinguished—Allenders of Allenders—and between four and five hundred a-year; now that's what I want a man for, Cuthbert."

"Between four and five hundred a-year," repeated Cuthbert gravely. "I would take it myself, to oblige you, Davie."

"Thank you—I could get lots," said the representative of the poet King-at-Arms. "But the right man, Charteris—by-the-bye, I should say the right woman—the right two women—where to lay my hands on them!—"

"So the heir is extant after all," said Cuthbert; "you know that, do you?"

"Wait a little, and I'll tell you what I know. They have always been a highly respectable family, these Allenders, mind, and you know what that means; comfort-

able, slow, common-sense folk, with no hair-brained sentimental traces about them. Well! the last father of them had seven sons—there was no appearance of a lack of heirs then—and one of the sons, the third or fourth I think, took it into his head to be a—what is your newest philosophical name for it—the Allenders said a sentimental fool—which means, you know, that he married somebody.”

“ I beg to assure you that there is no sort of philosophy in that achievement, Lion,” said Cuthbert.

“ Don’t interrupt me, Charteris—why, man, a romantic episode in the history of a dull family is a treasure. This son—his name was John—everybody’s name is John—married some poor girl or other in Stirling; and thereupon followed a regular tragic disowning of the refractory son. The good people were startled out of their propriety; never an Allenders had been known before, to do anything out of the

ordinary jog-trot, and the example of his daring aroused his father and his brethren. They cast him out—they banished him from the paternal countenance, and from all hope of ever inheriting the paternal acres, and so left him to seek his fortune, as he best could. That was seventy years ago.”

“Seventy years! why, the man must be dead,” said Charteris.

“Very possibly. It does not concern me that,” said Lindsay. “Well, Charteris, this sentimental John got some sort of situation in Stirling, and was by no means annihilated by the family ban. He thrived and multiplied for a few years—then his wife died suddenly, leaving him with two daughters, and then he disappeared.

“Where he went to, there is not the least clue. The man was half mad with grief, I suppose. It was said he was going to England—and it was said he was

going to America. It seems quite impossible to discover—every trace of him is gone. And now all the seven sons are exhausted; after all, it must be best to be stagnant, Charteris—for see you, whenever this romance stepped in among the decent people, what a blight it brought upon them. Four of them died unmarried—other two had children who have grown old and died during the lingering lifetime of the last proprietor. He was a childless widower—and now the old man has gone too; and where am I to get those heirs?”

“Did he know nothing of them,” said Cuthbert.

“Nothing; he died very old—upwards of ninety—and his senses failed him; but his memory seems to have turned with a strange kind of affection to this poor sentimental lost John. There are some far away cousins who would claim as heirs, but the old laird left a will, ordaining that



search should be first made for the children of John Allenders—children! they will not be quite youthful now:”

“And there is no trace?” said Cuthbert.

“None, but a rather fantastic one,” said Lindsay, smiling. “The favourite female name of the Allenders’ family was Violet—old Allenders thought it certain that one of those children would be called Violet—and their mother’s name was Rose. What’s the matter, Cuthbert?”

“Strange!” said Cuthbert, looking up, with a start. “Why, I met a family in Glasgow, last month, in which there were both these names.”

“Ay—where? what’s their name? who are they?” said Lindsay eagerly.

“Their name is Muir—they are rather a noticeable family in many respects,” said Cuthbert, with a little hesitation; “but so far as pecuniary matters go, very humble people. Could it be? Rose and Violet—there can be no mistake about the

names. I'll tell you what, Lindsay, I'll go through, myself, to the west, and find it out."

"Many thanks. I had no idea you took so much interest in these professional investigations," said Lindsay, with some curiosity, "I think it is more in *my* department than yours, Cuthbert."

"You don't know them, Davie—you're an alien and a foreigner, and an east countryman—whereas my mother is a Buchanan! I am free of the city, Lion, and then, I know the Muirs."

"Well, Cuthbert, you know your own secrets, I suppose," said Lindsay, laughing, "and whether all this is pure professional zeal, or no, I won't inquire; but as for your rubbish about east countrymen, you don't mean me to believe that, you know. Of course, if you are acquainted with the family, that is a great matter. But mind, be cautious!"

"Look at '*The Scotsman*,' Davie," said

Cuthbert, “and keep silence, while I read your advertisement. There now, be quiet.”

Two stories up in the honourable locality of York Place, lived Cuthbert's mother. They were not very rich, certainly, but the old lady had a sufficient portion of the means of comfort, to prove her a Buchanan. She was a little, brisk, active woman, under whose management everything became plentiful. It was not an economical propensity, but, refined and somewhat elegant though Mrs. Charteris' own individual tastes were, it was an indispensable thing with her that there should be “routh” in her house. So there were dependants hanging about her door at all times, and stores of bread and broken meat dispensed to all comers. Mrs. Charteris had unlimited faith in her two neat, blooming, sister servants. She thought they could discriminate the line between plenty and waste, almost as distinctly as she did herself—yet when Cuth-

bert returned home that day he found his mother delivering a short lively lecture on the subject—a lecture such as was rather a habit of hers—to the elder of the two trusted confidential maids.

“ You see, Lizzie, my woman, to lay the moulins out of the bread-basket on the window-sill for the sparrows is very kindly and wiselike—a thing that pleases me—but to crumble down one side of the good loaf that we’re using ourselves, is *waste*. You see the difference. It might have been given to some poor body.”

“ Yes, mem,” said Lizzie, demurely, “ and so I did. I gi’ed the ither half o’ the loaf to Marget Lowrie.”

Mrs. Charteris looked grave for a moment. “ We were using it ourselves, Lizzie ; but to be sure, in a house where there’s plenty, there should aye be the portion for folk that have more need, and as long as its lawfully used, Lizzie, I never find fault, but to waste is a great sin.

Now, you'll mind that, and take the moulins after this for the sparrows."

"It's Mr. Cuthbert, mem," said Jess, the younger sister of the two, returning from the door, and the little active old lady rustled away in her black silk gown to her parlour, to see what had brought home her son at so unusual an hour.

The parlour or drawing-room, for it might be called either, was a handsome room, though it was on the second story, and its very comfortable furniture had an air of older fashion than the present time, which suited very gracefully with the age of its mistress. Near one of its large windows stood an antique spider-legged table, bearing a work-box of somewhat elaborate manufacture, an open book, with Mrs. Charteris' silver thimble lying on it for a mark, and Mrs. Charteris' work by its side—while within reach of these stood an easy chair and a footstool. The spring was brightening rapidly, and Mrs. Char-

teris' chair stood always in this window, when the weather permitted her to leave the fireside—for here, as she plied her sewing, or glanced up from her book, she could observe the passengers in the street below, and watch for Cuthbert as he came home from his little office. Cuthbert had a slight look of excitement to-day, his mother thought, as she took off her spectacles, and looked at him with her own kindly unassisted eyes. Mrs. Charteris fancied her son had perhaps got a brief.

“ Well, Cuthbert, my man, what brings you home so soon?” said Mrs. Charteris, sitting down in her chair, and drawing in her footstool.

“ I think I will go through to Glasgow to-morrow, mother,” said Cuthbert hastily.

The old lady looked up with her glasses on. There was certainly an unusual flush and a happy embarrassed smile upon the face of her good son.

“The laddie’s possessed!” said Mrs. Charteris. “What would you do in Glasgow again so soon. It is not a month since you came home, Cuthbert?”

“Neither it is, mother,” said the advocate, “but I have got some business in hand—a mystery, mother, to exercise my legal judgment on.”

Mrs. Charteris was interested. “Aye, what’s that?”

There was a good deal of hesitation about the learned gentleman—it was evident there was no fee in this case.

“I told you about that young man, mother,—that family of Muirs.”

The old lady looked up quickly. She was a good deal interested in this family of Muirs, partly because her son had spoken much of them, and still more because he seemed so very willing to return to the subject. “What about them, Cuthbert?”

“I had Davie Lindsay with me to-day,”



said Cuthbert, lifting up and turning over the pages of his mother's book. "He is very anxious to trace out the heirs of a small old estate near Stirling, and I've a notion these Muirs are the people he wants."

Mrs. Charteris dropped her work on her knee, and looked up with much interest.

"The lost heir had two daughters called Rose and Violet,—rather a singular conjunction. Now the two younger Muirs bear these names—a strange coincidence, if it is nothing else; and if one could help such a family—I told you how much they interested me, mother."

"Yes," said the old lady; "Violet—that was the little girl—I heard you mention her—but which of them is Rose?"

Mr. Cuthbert Charteris looked a little foolish, and withdrew into the shadow of the curtain, which fortunately was green, and neutralised the slight unusual flush upon his face. "One forgets these girls'



names," he said, with a short laugh, "though this is rather a pretty one. The elder one is Martha, you know, mother—a grave enough name to make up for the romance of the other two—the intermediate young lady is Rose."

"How old is she, Cuthbert?" interrogated his mother.

"I really am no judge—I could hardly guess—quite young though," said Cuthbert hurriedly, "but the similarity of names is very striking, and if I could trace out a relationship, I should be exceedingly pleased, mother; besides, that one is bound, as a matter of duty, to assist in proving a birthright in any circumstances—and this young man will never do in business, it is clear—whereas he might make a capital country gentleman."

Mrs. Charteris was a little prejudiced. She shook her head: "It is not so easy to make a gentleman, Cuthbert; the transition from sixty pounds a-year to five

hundred, though it must be very comfortable, no doubt, will never accomplish that."

"Harry Muir, mother," said Cuthbert, "is not a wise man by any means—at five and twenty, I scarcely think I was very wise myself—but Harry Muir with his sixty pounds, is a gentleman already. I am afraid Dick Buchanan would suffer very greatly, if you saw them together, and compared the two."

"Ritchie Buchanan is your cousin, Cuthbert," said the old lady, warmly. "He is called after my father, who *was* a gentleman, though he was not so rich as his son. To be sure these laddies were very loud the last time I saw them, and I believe Ritchie had a ring, and no glove upon his hand—but still, Cuthbert, you must not be an ill bird."

"Well, we shall see," said Cuthbert, smiling. "Wait till I show you Harry Muir, mother—no discredit to Dick, or

any of them—but my uncle's clerk is a very different person ; poor fellow !—if he only had half as much prudence as the youngest of them, it would be better for him. He is of that class, who, people say, are nobody's enemies but their own."

"And that is just the most hopeless class of all, Cuthbert," said Mrs. Charteris ; "you may cure a bad man that has pith—you may turn a vessel that is ballasted and steady, into another course—but for your bits of gay pleasure-boats that float with the stream—alack and woe is me ! It is a hopeless work, Cuthbert : you never tried your hand at anything so vain."

"That is the sister's work, not mine, mother," said Cuthbert, "and I can believe it is not a very promising one—but in the meantime, I must try and lay my hands upon the clue which will conduct Davie Lindsay to his end, and give him an heir to Allenders. Of course, I will not speak of it to the family, till I have ascertained

something more about these names—but I think the result is very likely to be what I heartily wish it may.”

“I will wager you a silver crown, Cuthbert,” said Mrs. Charteris, “that the bairn is called after old Mrs. Violet Primrose of Govan, and that Mrs. Hervey of Monkland, is the name-mother of the elder one; and to make it the more appropriate, to-morrow is the first of April, and Davie Lindsay has sent you on a gouk’s errand, for a credulous callant as you are; now mind, I told you.”

“Very well, mother, we shall see,” responded Cuthbert.

## CHAPTER VII.

“ He has a secret motive in his search,  
Honest, yet would he not that all the world  
Saw full into his heart :—a right good heart—  
Devising nothing evil, yet aware  
Of certain silent secrets of its own.”

OLD PLAY.

It was not without a little embarrassment that Cuthbert presented himself next day at the office of his uncle. It was the day before the despatch of one of the mails, and everybody in the office was very busy. Round the desk of Mr. Gilchrist, the cashier, who had the capital business head, and the two hundred yearly pounds, the snuff lay in little heaps, and

all the clerks of meaner degree were working furiously, with scarcely time to interchange now and then, the usual *badinage* of the counting-house; while, in Mr. Buchanan's room, Richard sat writing letters beside his father.

"Better get away out of town, Cuthbert," said the merchant, "we shall be late to-night; but your aunt and Clemie are at home, and are always glad to see you, you know, whereas we shall only bore you, if you wait for us. I think you had better go down to Greenbank at once."

"Very well, uncle," said Cuthbert. He was quite resigned to postpone his enjoyment of their company for a few hours. "I have some business to do, but I shall get home before you, I think."

"I say, Cuthbert," said Richard in an aside, "why don't you ask for Harry Muir? I believe you've been there already."

"Then you believe nonsense, Dick,"

said Cuthbert, with a little heat. "How is he, poor fellow?"

"He's gone down to Ayr. Oh, he's recovering fast," said Richard. "These women made it worse than it was, you know, with their lamentations. I suppose you're going to call, Cuthbert?"

"I am going to look after a case which my friend Lindsay is engaged in," said Cuthbert, with some dignity. "I must do that before I make any calls. There now, that will do—you are sure to be late with your letters, Dick."

"I should not wonder," mused Dick Buchanan, as Cuthbert made his escape, "if his business was in Port Dundas after all." And the curious young merchant endeavoured to discover, through the opaque window, which course his cousin took; but the endeavour was quite unsuccessful. The dim yellow pane preserved Cuthbert's secret.

It was past mid-day when Cuthbert

reached the busy road to Port Dundas. It was, as usual, noisy and loud, and crowded, with echoing carts on its causeway, and streams of mill-girls pouring along its pavement, returning to the factories after dinner. Little stout round forms—faces sometimes sallow, but by no means unhealthy—hair dressed with extreme regard to the fashion, and always excellently brushed, and in the finest order—made these passengers, in their coloured woollen petticoats and bright short gowns, a very comely part of the street population. Very true most of them planted broad, sturdy, bare feet upon the dusty pavement; but the free loud mirth, no less than the comfortable habiliments, showed them quite removed from the depressing effects of extreme poverty—as indeed they were.

And opposite Harry Muir's house, in the little half finished street, Maggie McGillivray still sat clipping, with her brisk



scissors in her hand, sending her loud clear voice into the din like an arrow—and still another branch of the Glasgow feminine industry, came under the amused observation of Cuthbert, before he reached the little parlour.

Miss Aggie Rodger, with her large shoulders bursting from under the little woollen shawl, and a great rent in the skirt of her faded large-patterned cotton gown, sat on the highest step of the stair, holding in her hand a very dingy piece of embroidered muslin, which she was jerking about with wonderful rapidity as she “opened” it. Miss Aggie, like the humbler clipper, was lightening her task with the solace of song; but, instead of the clear flowing canty “Learig,” Miss Aggie, with great demonstration, was uttering the excellences of the Rose of Allandale. Both the natural voices were tolerably good; but Cuthbert thought he preferred Maggie McGillivray’s.

In the little "green," to which the paved passage from the street directly led, Miss Rodger, the elder sister, was laying out the collars and caps of the family to bleach. Miss Rodger was, in her way, a very proud person, and had a severe careworn face, which, six or seven years ago, had been pretty. From the green, Cuthbert heard her addressing her sister :

"Aggie, haud your tongue. Folk would think to see ye that you kent nae better than the like of that lassie McGillivray. They'll hear ye on the street."

"Ye can shut to the door, then, if ye're so proud," responded Miss Aggie, drawing out the long quavers of her song with unabated zeal.

Miss Jeanie, the prim intermediate sister, looked out from the kitchen window, and interrupted the dialogue in a vehement whisper :—"Aggie, will ye come out of that, and no let yoursel be seen,

such a like sicht as ye are? do ye no see the gentleman?"

Miss Aggie looked up—saw Cuthbert standing below—and, snatching up the torn skirt of her gown in her hand, fled precipitately, leaving behind her a considerable-sized dilapidated slipper, trodden down at the heel, which had escaped from her foot in her flight.

"I've lost yin o' my bauchals. Throw it into us, woman, Jean—what will the strange man think?" cried Miss Aggie, disconsolately, as she reached the safe refuge of the kitchen.

Miss Jeanie was dressed—for this was the day, on which they carried home their finished work, to' the warehouse which supplied them. Miss Jeanie was very prim, and had a little mouth, which she showed her appreciation of, as the one excellent feature in a tolerable face, by drawing her lips together, and making them round. She was magnificently ar-

rayed in a purple silk gown, bound round the waist with a silken cord, from which hung a superb pair of tassels. This dress was by far the grandest article of apparel in the house; and with great awe and veneration, Violet Muir had just intimated to her sisters, that Miss Jeanie was going to the warehouse, and that she had on, her Adelaide silk gown. Adroitly extending the skirt of this robe of state to cover the unlucky "bauchal" of Miss Aggie, Miss Jeanie primly stood by the open door, admitting the visitor, and Cuthbert entered without making any further acquaintance with the family.

The same universal feminine work re-appeared in the parlour, where Martha sat by the window in her usual place, busy with her usual occupation, while Rose, seated by the table, and occasionally pausing to glance down upon an open book which lay before her, listened with a smile, half of pleasure, half of amusement, as Violet,

standing by her side, with a glow upon her little pale face, poured forth page after page of the Bridal of Triermain. Martha too, raised her eyes now and then, with a smile of playful love in them—for little Lettie's low-voiced intense utterance, and enthusiasm, refreshed and pleased the heart which knew so many harder sorrows than the evils of romance. Rose was Violet's governess; in an evil hour the young teacher had bidden her pupil choose any poetry she liked for her task, and learn as much of it as pleased her. Now Violet did at that time particularly affect the minstrelsy of Sir Walter, and the result was, that already one canto of Triermain had been accomplished, and another, and another, remained to say.

Out of doors in the sunshine, Maggie McGillivray sang the "Learig," and with a gay flourish of her shears accompanied the swell of the "owerword," as she ended every verse. At the window in the

kitchen, Miss Aggie Rodger sat in a heap upon the table, and stayed her needle in mid-course, while she accomplished the Ro-o-se of A-ah-allandale; and within here the little form of Violet expanded, and her small face glowed, as her story progressed; while Rose smiled and worked, and glanced at the book; and Martha, with fresh and genuine pleasure, listened and looked on. After all, the gift of song is a fair gift to this laborious world. There was nothing very grand or elevated in either the ballads or the fable, yet enough to stir the heart, and keep the busy hands from weariness—and to do that, is to do well and merit a hearty blessing of the world.

Cuthbert was loth to disturb this pretty home scene, as he did at his entrance; but notwithstanding, Cuthbert was very well satisfied with the bright surprise and shy pleasure, which one at least of the little group displayed, and took his place among

them like an old friend. Violet's copy-book lay open on the table; and Violet made very bad pot-hooks indeed, and hated the copy intensely, though she liked the poetry. The copy lines set for her were not very beautiful either, though they were written in a good, sensible, female hand, which had some individuality in it, and was not of the fashionable style. Such copy lines! stray lines out of books, as diverse and miscellaneous as could be collected, differing most widely from those sublime, severe, abstract propositions, which in common cases introduce the youthful student to wisdom and half-text. Cuthbert could not help a visible smile as he glanced over them.

"I have interrupted my little friend's lesson," said Charteris, as he laid down the book.

Rose was shy of him. She did not answer.

"Violet has a great appetite for verse,"



said Martha, ; “we shall have all the rest of it at night.”

“Triermain.” Cuthbert was a little surprised that the child should be so far advanced—innocent Cuthbert! he did not know what a host of books, of all kinds and classes, the little Violet had devoured already.

“How is Mr. Muir?” asked Cuthbert. “I heard at the office he was not at home, and I was very glad to find that he was able for travelling. Have you heard from him? How is he?”

“He is getting strong rapidly, Agnes writes,” said Martha. “They are with my uncle in Ayr. We were brought up there, all of us, and so we say Harry has gone home. I hope it will strengthen him—every way,” she added, with a suppressed sigh.

“And so you like Sir Walter, Violet,” said Cuthbert; “come and tell me what you have read besides Triermain.”



Violet came shyly to his side, and drooped her head, and answered with bashfulness, "I have read them a'."

"Read them all! not quite, I think—how many books have you read, altogether?" said the puzzled Cuthbert.

Violet looked up with mingled astonishment and pity, and opened her eyes wide. She, who had already begun to look at advertisements of books, and to tease Mr. Syme, the librarian in the Cowcaddens, about new publications, which he had never heard of, and which in the ordinary course, would not reach him these hundred years—she to be asked how many books she had read! Violet was amazed at the want of apprehension, which such a question displayed.

"I have read a great heap—and I can say the Lord of the Isles, by heart, and bits of the Lady of the Lake."

Cuthbert's ignorance had given Violet a little courage; but as she met his eye,

her head drooped again, and she relapsed into her former shyness.

“And how old are you, Violet?”

“I shall be eleven next May.” Violet had already had very grave thoughts on this subject of her age. It seemed a stupendous thing to pass that tenth milestone.

“Violet—where did you get that pretty name of yours,” said Cuthbert, drawing his hand over her small dark head.

“It was my mother’s name,” said the little girl reverently.

The conversation came to a sudden pause. Conscious that he had a motive in asking those seeming simple questions, Cuthbert felt confused, and could not go on—so he turned to the copy-book.

“Have you written all this yourself, Violet?”

He had gone back to the beginning, and there certainly was to be traced the formation of a different hand from Violet’s—

the respectable, womanly writing which had placed those odd copy lines on the later pages ; he traced it as it improved, through a good many different steps of progress, and at the end found a clear, good-looking signature, proclaiming it to be the work of Rose A. Muir.

“ Rose A. Muir,” he repeated it un-awares aloud.

The bearer of the name started with a slight blush. Martha glanced at him with grave scrutiny — and little Violet, looking admiringly at her sister’s handwriting, explained, “ Rose was called after my grandmother.”

“ It is not a common name,” said Cuthbert, growing embarrassed under the grave eye of Martha. “ May I ask Miss Rose, what is represented by this A.”

“ It will be Anne or Alice, or some stupid woman’s name,” he said to himself, while his heart beat a little quicker.

“ I was called after my grandmother,

Mr. Charteris, as Lettie says, “ said Rose, shyly. “ It is Rose Allenders—that was her name.”

The young man started visibly. He had no idea of falling on anything so clear as this; but Martha looked at him with sudden curiosity, and he felt himself compelled to make some explanation.

“ It is by no means a usual name, Miss Muir,” said Cuthbert, turning to the elder sister. “ I know something. — I am slightly acquainted with a family called Allenders. Did this lady—your grandmother, Miss Rose—come from the east country ?”

“ I cannot tell, indeed,” said Rose. “ She died very long ago—before any of us were born.”

“ I think they came from London,” said Martha; “ I have heard my uncle say so —there were two sisters of them; and their father died in Ayr. Mrs. Calder, in the old town, was very kind to the

orphans, and took them in: and there the younger sister—her name was Violet—died; and my grandmother married Mrs. Calder's son. I have heard she died young too, and called her only child, who was our mother, after her little sister. It is a sad story altogether; but we heard my uncle speak of it often; and I remember how many of the old people in Ayr recollected Rose Allenders."

"My mother's name was Violet Calder," said Lettie, "but I am only plain Violet. She did not call me after all her name; but Rose has got two names because she's after my grandmother."

"I am going further west," said Cuthbert. "I shall be in Ayr for a day or two, I believe. I think I must ask you to introduce me to your uncle, Miss Muir."

"He will be glad to see you," said Martha, quietly. "But if you go now, you will find Harry established there. Give Mr. Charteris my uncle's address,

Rose—but indeed you hardly need that, for every one knows my uncle.”

But Cuthbert had not the least desire to meet Harry in Ayr. So he was careful to excuse himself, and suddenly discovered that he could not be able to make acquaintance with Alexander Muir, the uncle, for a full fortnight, by which time it was certain that Harry must have returned.

## CHAPTER VIII.

“ There is all hope in thee, sweet Spring, sweet Spring !  
Dull voices, speaking of thee, unawares,  
Bewray themselves to sing.  
For every name thou hast such music bears ;  
Whether 't is March, when all the winds are gay—  
Or April, girlish in her wayward way—  
Or sweetest May.”

DAY by day passed, of Harry Muir's last bright week at Ayr—passed no less happily to the three sisters, than to himself and his little wife—and at last, fresh, healthful, and in high spirits, the youthful couple and their baby returned home.

To walk to the coach-office to meet them, was of itself a jubilee for the home-

dwellers, and Mrs. Rodger herself held the door open for them, in stately welcome. Mrs. Rodger was a tall old woman, gaunt and poverty-stricken, in her dingy widow's cap, and black cotton gown; but Mrs. Rodger had been "genteel" once, and never forgot it. She extended one of her long arms, and gave Harry's hand a swing, as he stopped to greet her. "I was just telling our weans," said Mrs. Rodger, "that the house wasna like itself, wanting you—and I hope you find your leg strong, Mr. Muir; bless me, how the wee boy's grown! I would scarce have kent him; bring him ben, Violet, and let the weans get a look o' him. What a size he's turned!"

Miss Aggie, the youngest of the afore-said weans, plunged out of the kitchen, and seized the baby with loud expressions of admiration. The little wife was easily flattered by praise of that blue-eyed boy of hers, and was by no means unwilling



to accompany him herself, and exhibit him to the assembled "weans" in Mrs. Rodger's kitchen.

This apartment, which answered all purposes to the family, was a good-sized room, showing an expanse of uncovered floor, not over clean, and a great wooden "bunker" for coals, as its most noticeable feature. The "bunker" is an article which belongs exclusively to the household arrangements of Glasgow. This one was not very high as it happened, and on the corner of it sat Miss Jeanie, her hands busy with her work, her feet deposited on a chair below. Miss Aggie, in like manner, occupied a corner of the table in the window. Their work required a good deal of light, and they were fettered by no punctilios as to attitude. Miss Rodger, the eldest sister, flitted in and out of a dark scullery—and withdrawn as far as possible from the light, in the dusky corner, by the fireside, sat a shabby and not very

young man, with shuffling indolent limbs stretched across the hearth, and pins, the sole gathering of his idleness, stuck in the lappel of his dusty, worn coat, and a face that promised better things. This was "Johnnie," as they called him, Mrs. Rodger's only son. Poor Johnnie had begun this sad manner of life by a long illness, and now, between his rheumatism and his false shame, incapable, as it seemed, of any strenuous endeavour to make up for what he had lost, had sunk into the state of an indolent dependant upon the little earnings of his sisters. They had their faults, these women ; but never one of them murmured at the burden thus thrown upon them. Living very meanly, as they were constrained to do, they were still perfectly content to toil for Johnnie. It never seemed to occur to them at all, indeed, that the natural order of things was reversed in their case. Sometimes, it is true, there was a quarrel be-

tween the mother, who was a termagant, and the poor indolent shipwrecked son, whose temper was easily galled, having always this sore consciousness to bear it company—but never one of the sisters upbraided Johnnie, or made a merit of labouring for him. Amidst all their vanity, and vulgarity, this one feature elevated the character of the family, and gave to those three very common-place young women, a standing-ground of which no one could possibly be less conscious than they were themselves.

The large good-humoured hoyden, Miss Aggie, danced the baby in her arms, and carried him to the fireside to her brother. Poor Johnnie took the boy more gently, and praised him to his mother's heart's content, while Violet, no longer shy, but at present very fluent and talkative, stood by the side of her special friend and ally, Mr. John. The little girl and the poor

indolent man, were on very intimate terms.

“I was just telling our weans,” repeated Mrs. Rodger, “that the wee boy would be just another creature after a while in the country; and cheeks like roses you’ve gotten yoursel, Mrs. Muir. It would be unco’ dull though, I’m thinking—if it had only been the saut water—but its no the season for the saut water. I mind when Archie was living—that’s their father—we gaed down regular to Dundoon, and it was just a pleasure to see the weans when they came hame.”

“Agnes, Martha says the tea’s ready,” said Violet, “and I’m to carry little Harry ben.”

The tea-table in the parlour was pleasantly covered, and still more pleasantly surrounded, and Agnes’ basket, which the good uncle’s own hands had packed, remained still unopened; so the baby was

given over to the safe keeping of Rose, and the busy young wife began to distribute uncle Sandy's tokens of remembrance.

“ This pot of honey is for you, Martha,—uncle Sandy thought you would like to give it to us all, now and then, on high days—and here is a bottle of cream from Mrs. Thomson, at the corner, and a little silk handkerchief to Rose, and the last of the apples to Violet—and see here, look, all of you, look !”

Two little flower-pots carefully packed with moss, one of them bearing a tuft of fragrant little violets, the other proudly supporting a miniature rose-bush, with one little bud just appearing from its green leaves—good gentle uncle ! He had been at so much trouble getting this fairy rose, and cherishing it in his little sitting-room, till this solitary bud rewarded his nursing. It was hailed with a burst of delight from Violet, and by the elder sisters,

with a pleasure which almost reached to tears.

“It is so like my uncle,” said Rose.

And then with some happy excitement, they gathered round the tea-table. Harry had a great budget of local news to open, and the blithe Agnes interrupted him every moment to tell of her first impressions, and new acquaintance. There had been beautiful weather, sunny and soft, as it often is in the early part of April, and the young wife had left all cares behind her on the grave shoulders of Martha. Harry had been so well, so happy, so considerate—enjoying so thoroughly the simple pleasures of his old home, and the society of his pure unsophisticated uncle—Agnes thought she had never been so happy.

And Harry's face was sparkling with healthful blameless pleasure. He looked so man-like, the centre of their anxieties and wishes, and was in reality so fresh-

hearted, and capable of innocent enjoyment, that Martha's troubled heart grew glad over the success of her experiment. He had been home—he had seen again in these old scenes, the pure heroic fancies of his earliest youth, and many days hence the anxious sister thought the happy effect would remain.

They closed the evening, as it was always closed in the house at Ayr—with the simple and devout worship of the family. Harry, with his fine mind so clear to-night, and happily elevated, a young household priest, conducted those simple fervent devotions—for the religious emotions were strong within him. They swayed him much sometimes, as, unfortunately other feelings swayed him at other some; but he was deeply susceptible at all times to all the beauty, all the grandeur of the holy faith he professed. The young man's voice trembled, and his heart swelled as he appealed to the Great Father



for the sake of the wonderful Son. And as, most humbly and earnestly, he asked for strength against temptation, the tears in Martha's eyes were tears of hope—almost of joy. She thought that surely never again this young ingenuous spirit would fall—never again forsake that holy brotherhood, at whose head He stands, who was once tempted for the sake of us—to defile its garments with the mean sins of former times. There was a shadow of deep quiet upon all their faces as they rose from their knees; they thought they had come to the beginning of a purer, happier time. They, these anxious women, thought so for him; and he, poor Harry! for himself, with those joyous eyes of his, looked forward to the future, without fear.



## CHAPTER IX.

“I was gay as the other maidens—all the springs and hopes and youthful things of the world were like me : prithee, lady, think not I say so out of envy of your fair estate ; for in good sooth, youth is estate enough for a free heart. But before youth goes, troubles come—yourself must meet them anon—and be not fearful, gentle one ; for it may be they will leave rare wealth with you, and take but a little sunshine away.”

OLD PLAY.

THE next day Harry entered blithely upon his old duties again. The morning was sunny, and bright, and Agnes stood at the window with the baby, to watch him as he emerged from the outer door below, and turned to look up to her, and take off his hat in playful salutation. He had a little cluster of fresh spring prim-

roses, pulled last morning in the Ayr garden, gracing his button-hole, and there was a spring in his step, and an elastic grace in his manner as he went away, that made glad the heart of the little wife. They were all very blithe this morning—the gladness came involuntarily from Agnes' lips in the familiar form of song; she sang to the baby—she sang to them all.

She was still a girl, this pretty wife of Harry Muir—a girl belonging to that very large class, who never discover that they have hearts at all, until they have sent them forth on some great venture, perilling all peace for ever. Agnes had been a very gay, perhaps a rather foolish girl—liking very greatly the small vanities which she could reach, and managing to keep out of sight the graver matters of life. She knew what it was to be poor—but then she had known that all her life, and the difficulties fell upon elder people,

not on herself, and Agnes sailed over them with innocent heedlessness. The heart slumbered quietly in her bosom—she scarcely knew it was there, except when it beat high sometimes for some small merry-making; scarcely even when she married Harry Muir were those gay placid waters stirred. She liked him very much—she admired him exceedingly—she was very proud of him—yet still she had not found out her heart.

But when the cloud began to steal over the gay horizon of her life—when she had to watch for his coming, and tremble for his weakness, and weep over his faults those sad apologetic tears, and say, poor Harry! then this unknown existence began to make itself felt within the sobbing breast of the little, pretty, girlish wife. The sad and fatal weakness, which made him in a certain degree dependant upon them—which aroused the feelings of anxious care, the eager expedients to pro-

tect him from himself, gave a new character to Agnes. In sad peril now was the happiness of this young, tender, sensitive heart; but the danger that threatened it had quickened it into conscious life.

He went away with smiles, and hopeful freshness to his daily labour. He came home, honestly wearied, at an earlier hour than usual, having his conscience free of offence that day. So happily they all gathered about the little tea-table; so gaily Agnes presided at its tea-making, and Martha placed on the table the little crystal vessel full of honey—odorous honey, breathing out stories of all the home flowers of Ayr—so much the travellers had still to tell, and the dwellers at home to hear.

“And now, Martha,” said Harry, “put on your bonnet, and come out. I believe she has never been out, Agnes, all the time we have been away.”

“Yes, indeed, Harry—Martha was

always at the Kirk," said the literal Violet.

"But we are not going to the Kirk to-night—come Martha, and taste this April air."

Martha looked at her work. "It is a temptation, Harry; but I think you had better take Rose—see, Rose looks white with working so long, and I have to go to the warehouse to-morrow."

"To the Candleriggs!" said Harry, laughing. "Where you scarcely can tell when it is June and when December; and if Rose is white, you are absolutely green with sitting shut up here so long—come, Martha."

It was not very complimentary, but the pallid faded cheek of Martha actually bore, to eyes which had been in the sunshine, a tinge of that undesirable hue. Save for the beneficent rest of the Sabbath-day, and the walk through the hushed streets to

church, Martha had indeed, since her brother went to Ayr, never been out of doors. The luxury of sending Harry to the pure home atmosphere was not a cheap one. She had been labouring for, while he enjoyed it.

“But what if Mr. Charteris comes?” said Rose, with a little shyness: no one else seemed to remember that Mr. Charteris was to come.

“We shall not stay long,” said Harry; “you must keep him till we return.”

Rose seemed half inclined to go too; but she remembered how often Martha had sent her out to enjoy the walk which she had denied herself; and there were a great many “holes,” as those very prosaic sempstresses called the little spaces in the centres of the embroidered flowers, at which they worked, to be finished before they were returned to the warehouse to-morrow—so even at the risk of a little additional

conversation with the formidable Mr. Charteris, Rose made up her mind to stay.

And Martha and Harry went out alone. They were not within reach of any very pleasant place for walking, but they struck off through some of those unsettled transitionist fields which hang about the outskirts of great towns, to the side of the canal. Those soft spring evenings throw a charm over the common place atmosphere, of even such ordinary haunts as this—and it is wonderful indeed, when one's eyes and heart are in proper trim, how the great sky itself alone, and the vast world of common air, in which we breathe, and through which human sounds come to us, can suffice to refresh our minds with the Nature, which is beautiful in every place.

The distant traffic of the "Port," to which this canal is the sea; the flutter of dingy sloop sails, and a far-off prospect of the bare cordage, and brief masts of little

Dutch vessels, delivering their miscellaneous cargoes there, gave a softened home look, almost like the quiet harbour of some little seaport, to a scene which, close at hand, could boast of few advantages. But the air was bright with the haze of sunset, and in the east the sky had paled down to the exceeding calmness of the eventide, lying silently around its lengthened strips of island cloud, like an enchanted sea. Dull and blank was the long level line of water at their feet, yet it was water still, and flowed, or seemed to flow ; and along the bank came the steady tramp of those strong horses, led by a noisy cavalier whose accoutrements clanked and jingled like a steam-engine, piloting the gaily-painted " Swift " boat from Edinburgh, with its crowds of impatient passengers, to the end of their tedious journey. These were homely sights—but the charmed atmosphere gave a harmony to them all.

And there were some trees upon this



side of the canal—and grass as green as though it lived a country life, and stout weeds, rank and vigorous, by the side of the way—and the hum of the great town came softly on their ear, with here and there a distinct sound, breaking the inarticulate hum of that mass of busy life. Better than all these, there was such perfect confidence between the brother and sister, as had scarcely been before, since he was the unstained boy, innocent and ignorant, and she the eager teacher, putting forth a second time in this young untried vessel, the solemn venture of her hopes. It was not that Harry had anything to confide to the anxious heart, which noted all his thoughts and modes of feeling so narrowly; but the little daily things which sometimes have so weighty a bearing upon the most important matters of life—the passing fancies, the very turns of expression, which show the prevailing tone of the speaker's mind, were

so frankly visible to the eye of the watchful sister, that Martha's heart rejoiced within her with solemn joy.

Meanwhile, Rose sat alone in the parlour doing her work, somewhat nervously, and hoping fervently that Mr. Charteris would not come till "somebody was in" to receive him.

The baby lay sound asleep in the cradle. Agnes had gone down to Mrs. McGarvie to negotiate about some washing, and was at this moment standing in Mrs. McGarvie's kitchen, near the small table where Mrs. McGarvie herself, with the kettle in one hand, and a great horn spoon in the other, was pouring a stream of boiling water into a bowl half filled with the beautiful yellow peasemeal, which keeps the stomachs of Glasgow in such superlative order, compounding the same into brose, for the supper of Rab, who newly come in, had just removed his blue bonnet from his shaggy red head in honour of his mother's

visitor. Mrs. McGarvie had undertaken the washing, and Agnes in her overflowing happy spirits, was telling her about the journey, from which they had just returned.

Violet, last of all, was in Mrs. Rodger's "big room," a very spacious, fine apartment, which was generally occupied by some lodger. They had no tenant for it at present, and were this evening entertaining a party in the large, lofty, shabbily-furnished dining room. Violet had gone in among these guests with the natural curiosity of a child, and poor Rose, nervously apprehensive of the coming of this formidable Mr. Charteris, sat in the parlour alone.

Her busy fingers began to flag as she filled up these "holes;" and now and then, the work dropped on her knee. The ordinary apprehensions about Harry, which generally formed the central object of her thoughts, were pleasantly hushed to-night.

Rose was not thinking about anything particular—she would have said so, at least—but for all that, long trains of indefinite fancies were flitting through her mind, and her thick blunt needle was altogether stayed now and then—only recovering in hysteric bursts its ordinary movements, when Rose trembled to fancy that she heard a step on the stair. If Agnes would only come in—if Harry and Martha were but home again!

At last a step was on the stair in reality. “Maybe it is Agnes,” said Rose to herself as her needle began to fly again through the muslin—but it was not only Agnes—it was the foot of a man—poor Rose wondered if by any possibility she could run away.

And there he was, this sad ogre whom Rose feared, quietly opening the parlour door, as if he had some right to be there. Mr. Charteris was almost as shy as Rose herself. He sat down with pleased em-

barrassment, and looked exceedingly awkward, and spoke by no means so sensibly as he was used to do. Rose eagerly explained the reason why she was alone, and went to the window in haste to look for Agnes.

Mr. Charteris' eye had been caught by something of a very faded neutral hue, in a black frame, which hung above the mantelpiece. He asked Miss Rose if it was embroidery.

Miss Rose was moved to laughter, and her laugh dispersed the mist of shyness very pleasantly. "It is only an old sampler of my grandmother's, Mr. Charteris."

Mr. Charteris rose to look at it.

"There is not much art in it," said Rose, "it seems that all the landscapes on samplers are of one style—but my mother gave it to me when I was a girl—a little girl—and I used to be proud of it, because it was my own."

Mr. Charteris took it down to examine

its beauties more closely. It bore the name of the artist at full length "Rose Allenders," and had a square house, and some very original trees, like the trees of very old paintings, elaborately worked upon it.

"I think you said she had been long dead," said Cuthbert.

"Long ago—very long ago," said Rose. "When my mother was only a child, my grandmother died. Her name is on the stone, among the rest of the Calders, and her father and her little sister are near her, in the churchyard. Uncle Sandy used to take us there when we were children. I believe he thought they would feel lonely in their very graves, because they lay among strangers."

There was a pause. Cuthbert again hung up the faded sampler, and Rose worked most industriously at her opening. Each was earnestly endeavouring to invent something to say—and both of them were

singularly unsuccessful. It was the greatest possible relief to Rose to hear Harry's voice in the passage.

The two young men greeted each other heartily—it seemed that there was some charm in these very faults of poor Harry—for everybody learned to like and apologise for, even while they blamed him.

“And so you are going to Ayr,” said Harry, “why did you not come a little earlier, Mr. Charteris, that I might have shown our town to you. You will not appreciate the beauties it has, unless some one, native to it, points them out.”

“For which cause I am here to seek an introduction which Miss Muir promised me to your uncle,” said Cuthbert.

“To my uncle? are you a character hunter, Mr. Charteris?” said Harry quickly, and with something which Rose thought looked like rudeness.

“No, I don't think so—but why do you ask me?”



“ Because the vulgar call my uncle a character and an original,” said Harry. “ I thought your cousin, who saw him once, might have told you so,—and he does not like the imputation. We are jealous of my uncle’s feelings, as we have a good right to be, for he has been father, and teacher, and companion alike to all of us.”

“ I had some business in the neighbourhood of Ayr,” said Cuthbert, with a little conscious embarrassment—“ one of those things in our profession that border upon the romantic,—there are not many of them, Miss Rose;—I want to trace out some links of descent—to find some lost members of an old family. I shall find them only by means of gravestones I apprehend, but that will answer my purpose. It is not quite in my department, this kind of business; but it is pleasant to have some excuse for seeing so fine a country in this time when ‘ folk are



longen to gon on pilgrimages.'—I think you must begin to feel this longing, Miss Muir?"

"It is wonderful how easily one can content oneself," said Martha, with a smile which spoke of singular peace. "We have only to shut our eyes, Rose and I, and straightway we are at home—or to send some one else to enjoy it, Mr. Charteris. Harry and Agnes, have brought us so much of the atmosphere that I scarcely desire it now for myself."

## CHAPTER X.

“ Ay, even here, in the close city streets,  
’Tis good to see the sunset—how the light,  
Curious and scornful, thrusts away the masses.  
Of vapour brooding o’er the busy town,  
Yet leaves a trace of rosy light the while  
Even on the thing it scorns.  
And the rich air gives sweetness to all sounds ;  
And hazy sunbeams glorify young faces—  
And labour turns aside, glad of its hour  
Of aimless idling.”

CUTHBERT CHARTERIS, much against his will, was detained a week longer in Glasgow. His uncle, a man of unbounded hospitality, an almost invariable characteristic of his class, was not without a little family pride in Cuthbert’s attainments and position—and such a succession

of people had been already invited to “meet” Mr. Buchanan’s advocate nephew, that Cuthbert’s good humour, though already sufficiently taxed, would not suffer him to disappoint them.—Neither was it until the very last evening of the week, when he had made positive arrangements for going to Ayr next day, that he had leisure to call on the Muirs.

The sun was setting on the soft April evening, and the slanting level sunbeams streamed through the dusty streets, drawing out in long shadows the outline of the houses. Within these shadows the bystanders felt almost the chill of winter, while in the sunshine at the street corners, lounging groups congratulated each other that summer had come at last.

Here the light fell on a white “mutch” or two, and on the sun-burnt heads of innumerable children, of whose boisterous play the gossip mothers took no notice.—There it glimmered and sparkled in braids

and curls, and plaits of beautiful hair which a *coiffeur* might have studied for the benefit of his art, and which you could scarcely fancy the short thick toil-hardened fingers of these laughing mill-girls able to produce. But toilsome as their factory life was, it had its edge of enjoyment, quite as bright and enlivening as the evening recreations of any other class—and with those young engineer workmen clustering around them, and the evening sunshine and the hum of continual sound—sound which expressed repose and sport, and scarcely had the least admixture of the laborious din of full day—filling the atmosphere, there were many scenes less pleasant and less graceful, than the street corner and its groups of mill-girls. And here, up the broad road, now almost free of the carts which usually crowd it, dashes at full speed a bright little equipage glowing in green and gold, which draws up with a flourish at the corner. Straight-

way the “closemouths,” and “common stairs” pour forth a stream of girls and women, carrying vessels of every form and size, from the small china cream-jug from some lonely lady’s tea-table, to the great pitcher under which little Mary staggers as she carries it home in her arms to supply the porridge of a dozen brothers and sisters; and you never were refreshed with richer milk under the deepest umbrage of summer trees, than that which gives forth its balmy stream from the pretty green barrels hooped with brilliant brass, which rest upon the light framework of the Port Dundas dairy cart.

Rose Muir stood at the door as Cuthbert approached—he had chosen a later hour than usual for his visit, that he might not disturb them at their simple evening meal—but as he glanced at the downcast face of Rose, over which an uneasy colour was flushing, he saw that the old anxiety, the origin of which he had guessed at before,

had now again returned. The long wistful glances she cast along the street—the eager expectant look with which she turned to himself—once before the herald of poor Harry—would have almost sufficed to reveal the secret of the family to Cuthbert had he not guessed it before.

“Harry has not come home yet,” said Rose, with an unconscious apology in her tone; “they are sometimes kept very late at the office—but my sisters are up stairs, Mr. Charteris, will you come in?”

Cuthbert followed her silently. He had become so much interested in the fortunes of the family, that he felt his own heart sink, as he remembered that “the office” had been closed a full hour ago.

Agnes was alone when they entered the parlour, and Cuthbert, roused to observation, saw her sudden start as they opened the door, and the pallor and sickness of disappointment which came over her pretty youthful face, when her eye fell upon him—

self. The work she had been busy with, fell from the fingers which seemed for the moment too nervous to hold it. The little wife had been so confident—so sure of Harry's reformation,—and her heart was throbbing now with a positive agony of mingled fear and hope.

Cuthbert seated himself on the sofa, and began to talk of the baby—it was almost the only subject which could soothe the young mother—but even while he spoke, he could see how nervously awake they both were to every sound; how Rose suspended her work and held her breath at every footstep in the street below which seemed to approach the door—and how the needle stumbled in the small fingers of Agnes, and the unusual colour flickered on her cheek.

“You are very late, Harry,” said Martha, entering from the inner room—Cuthbert's back was towards her—she thought it was her brother.

“It is Mr. Charteris, Martha,” said Rose.

There was a fiery light in Martha’s eyes—an impatience almost fierce in the evident pang, and short suppressed exclamation with which she discovered her mistake. She too had been strong in her renewed hope—had begun to rest with a kind of confidence in the changed mind of Harry.

But now the former chafing had commenced again, and the bitter hopelessness which once before overpowered her, returned upon her heart—Cuthbert thought of the old grand picture of the bound Prometheus—of the lurid background, and the cold tints of the captive figure, rigid in his manacled strength, with the vulture at his heart. Bitterest of dooms, to be bound to this misery, without one free hand to struggle against it.

But Martha took her seat in silence, and a conversation was very languidly carried on. Insensibly Cuthbert felt the



same anxiety steal over himself—he felt that he *ought* to go away, but yet he remained. By degrees the conversation dwindled into broken remarks from himself, and faltering responses from Rose and Agnes; sometimes indeed Martha spoke, but her words were harsh and bitter, or else full of a conscious mockery of light-heartedness, which was more painful still.

The tea-tray with its homely accompaniments stood on the table—the little kettle sang by the side of the old-fashioned grate,—but the night was now far advanced, and reluctant to shut out the lingering remains of daylight, the sisters had laid aside their work; it was almost dark, and still Harry had not come.

“Where is Violet, Agnes,” said Martha, after a long silence.

“She went out to play,” said the little wife. “Some of her friends were down here, and they wanted her. I could not keep Lettie in, Martha, on so fine a night.”

“I was angry at the poor bairn,” said Martha, with a singular humility, “I did wrong. I will go myself and look for her—our troubles are not so few that we should make additions to them of our own will.”

There was a strange pathos in the low tone in which Martha spoke, and in the sudden melting of the strained vehement heart. Cuthbert saw the trembling hand of Agnes steal up to her eyes, and heard the appealing deprecatory whisper of Rose, “Oh Martha!” He could see its meaning—he could hear in it an echo of that other exclamation—poor Harry! so common in this house.

Little Violet had been at play in the street below, carrying the vague blank grief of childhood into her very sport. As Martha rose, the little girl suddenly burst into the room. “Agnes, Harry’s coming.”

They were all very quiet—a sort of

hush of deep apprehension came upon the sisters, and Rose went out hastily to the door.

In another moment, Harry had entered the room—looking very pale, and with an unmeaning smile upon his face. He came forward with great demonstration to greet Charteris, and hurried over an elaborate account of things which had detained him—the strangest complication of causes, such as came in no one's way but his.

“Why don't you light the candles?” said poor Harry, with an ostentatious endeavour at high spirits. “Have you been sitting in the dark like so many crows? Rosie, quick, light this, and get another candle. You don't think we can see with one, and Mr. Charteris here. Have you not got tea yet, Agnes? Nonsense, what made you wait for me? I can't always be home at your hours, you know—when a man hasn't his time at his own

disposal, you know, Mr. Charteris—what is it now?—what do you want, Lettie?”

The solitary candle had been lighted, and placed on the table. It threw a painful illumination upon Harry's perfectly colourless face, as he stood in the middle of the room, with an unsteady swing in his movements. Agnes had left the arm-chair to him, but still he stood by the table—while Rose, with a paleness almost as great as his upon her face, went about painfully arranging things that needed no arrangement, and Martha sat rigid in her chair.

“I say, what is it, Lettie?” repeated Harry.

“Nothing, Harry—only you've torn your coat,” said Violet.

She showed it to him—some one had seized his skirt apparently, to detain him, and a great rent was visible. It brought a sudden flush to the damp face of poor

Harry, but the flush was of defiance and anger. He struck Violet with his open hand, and exclaimed impatiently, "Get away, what business have *you* with that?"

It was a very slight blow—and Violet shrank away in silence out of the room; but a deep red burning colour flushed over Martha's faded face, and with a quick impulsive start, she rose from her chair.

"Harry!" Her harsh hoarse voice seemed to sober the unhappy lad. He looked round him for a moment on those other pale faces, and on the grieved and embarrassed Cuthbert, with the defiant stare which he had tried to maintain before; but as his eyes turned to Martha, and to the deep and painful colour of shame and anguish on her face, poor Harry's courage fell. He did not speak—he glided into the vacant chair, and suddenly abandoning his poor design of concealment covered his face with his hands.

“Harry is not well—he is not strong poor fellow,” said Agnes ‘almost sobbing, “get a cup of tea for him, Rose. Martha, sit down.”

Martha obeyed, mechanically. There was a struggle in the face of poor Harry’s passionate sister. The fierce impatience of her anger seemed melting away—melting into that utter despondency and hopelessness—that deep humiliation, which with the second sight that sometimes adds new pangs to sorrow, saw that to hope was useless, and yet in the depths did only cling the closer to this impossible hope. Poor Harry! Martha was not given to weeping, but then she could have wept—such desperate burning tears, as only come out of the depths.

Cuthbert felt that if he had helped to increase their pain by being a spectator of this scene, he would but add to it by hastening immediately away.

“I shall have a long walk,” he said,

with forced ease, "and I think I must now crave your last message for Ayr, Miss Muir. What am I to say to your uncle?"

"That you left us—Nay," said Martha, restraining herself with a great effort, and glancing over to Harry with a strange yearning look of grief, "say little to the old man, Mr. Charteris. He knows how he would wish us to be in his own gentle heart—and it is best to leave it so; say we were well—and now we must not detain you. Harry, have you anything to say to my uncle?"

Poor Harry uncovered his white unhappy face. "I?—nothing—nothing—you know I have nothing to say—good bye, Mr. Charteris."

"It is so short a time since we left Ayr," said Agnes, offering Cuthbert her trembling hand.

And then he left the room.

The lobby was quite dark. Cuthbert

fancied he heard some sound like a suppressed sob as Rose stole out after him, and closed the parlour door. It was Violet sitting in gloom and solitude on the ground, with her little desolate heart well nigh bursting. Martha had been displeased at her. Harry had struck her—and fearful dreams of being utterly alone, and having no one in the world to care for her, were passing drearily through Violet's mind. That sad dumb anguish of the child, which we do not seem ever to remember when we have children to deal with, weighed down the young spirit to the very dust. She thought, poor solitary girl, miserable proud thoughts of dying, and leaving them to grieve for her when she was dead, who would not care for her enough when she was living—and she thought, too, of toiling on alone to the vague greatness which children dream of, and shutting up her heart in her solitary course, from those who had chilled



and rejected it so early. Poor little dreaming inconsistent poetic child, who in an hour could be bright as the sunshine again—but while it lasted there were few things in elder life so bitter as that childish pain.

Rose lifted her up and followed Charteris to the door, holding the weeping and reluctant Violet within her arm. “Mr. Charteris,” said Rose, eagerly, “do not say anything to my uncle about——. I mean, will you just tell him we are well, and not say that anything ails Harry? Will you, Mr. Charteris?”

Cuthbert did not quite know what he answered, neither did Rose; but whatever it was it cheered her; and as he went away, the youthful woman lingered in the darkness, stooping over the child. Rose had reached a further stage than Violet in this grave journey of life; and if she knew more fully the absolute causes of the family affliction, she had outgrown the indefinite

gloom and terror. Other thoughts, too, came in to lighten, in some degree, the heaviness of her own heart, as she soothed and consoled her little sister. Harry hitherto had been constantly the central object in her mind—the dearest always, and in his brightest times the best—perhaps only the more endeared for all his weakness; but now there began to dawn upon Rose a stronger, purer, higher ideal. Stealthy and tremulous the thought glided into her mind; a higher excellence than poor Harry's—a fairer fate than that of Harry's sister. She put it away as if it had been guilt; but still it had looked in upon her, and left a trace of secret sunshine behind.

Thus they were, the child and the girl—Violet already cheered by the gentle voice of Rose, and Rose lightened with the fair fantastic light of her own thick-coming fancies. Neither forgot the sorrow which was parted from them only by these

slight walls—neither yet could stay their involuntary tears—and the elder heart overflowed with pity and tenderness for poor Harry; but yet there were others than Harry in the world for both.

Within that little room it was far otherwise. He was sitting there still, his clasped hands covering his face, and the cup of tea, which Agnes had poured out for him, standing untasted on the table. No one else had thought of beginning to this joyless meal. Agnes sat near him, leaning her arm upon his chair, touching his shoulder sometimes, and murmuring “Harry;” but he had not lifted his head. Opposite him, Martha sat very still, her eyes wandering about, her fingers convulsively clasped, her features moving. Sometimes she started suddenly, as if she could have dashed that aching brow of hers against the wall; sometimes a low unconscious moan escaped from her lips; and

when, after wandering round the room, noting the little well-known peculiarities of its furniture, as people only do in their bitterest moments, her eyes turned to Harry lying motionless in his chair, with the damp hair clustering upon his brow, and his hands hiding his face, the anger and passion fled away from her brow like shadows. Poor Harry! in his weakness, in his sin—only so much the more her own—not the strong man now, for whom she had woven dreams of fond and proud ambition—but ever and always the dependent boy, the child she tended long ago—the unhappy lad over whom her heart yearned now as a mother. Martha rose—the tears came out from under her dry eyelids—a sad smile dawned upon the stern harsh features of her face. She laid her hand upon his shoulder.

“Harry, Harry, is it worth all this misery? We have nothing but you—no

hope in this world but you. Will you take it from us, Harry? Will you make us desolate?"

The little wife looked up through her tears, begging forbearance. Poor Harry himself lifted his head, and grasped the hands she held out to him. "Never again—never again."

Her tears fell upon the clasped hands, and so did his. "Never again." Violet crept to his side, and softly laid her little hand upon his arm. Agnes, weeping quietly, rested her head upon his shoulder, almost happy again in the reconciliation; and Rose stood behind his chair.

Poor Harry! They all heard his vow; they all tried to take up their hope, and once more look fearlessly on the future. No one believed more devoutly than he did himself that now he could not fall again. No one was so confident as he that this sin was his last: "Never again."

Heavy, unseen tears flowed from under Martha's closed eyelids that night, when all the rest were peacefully asleep—poor Harry first of all. Never again! The words moved her to anything but hope. Poor Harry!

## CHAPTER XI.

“ Winter hath many days most like to Spring ;  
Soft thawing winds, and rains like dew, and gleams  
Of sweet inconstant sunshine.—I have seen  
An old man’s heart that ne’er was done with seedtime,  
Abiding in its gracious youth for ever.”

THE next morning very early, while Martha Muir, unable to rest, sat at the window, carefully mending the torn coat which was poor Harry’s only one, Cuthbert Charteris set out on the top of the coach for Ayr. What he had seen on the previous night oppressed him heavily, weighing down even the natural exhilaration which the morning sunshine usually brought to a mind void of offence towards

men, and walking by faith humbly with God. Continually that scene rose up before him—the hidden tears and trembling of Agnes and Rose—the stern agitation of Martha—the fatuous smile upon poor Harry's white conscious face. "Poor Harry !" the stranger echoed with emotion, the sad tenderness of this lamentation so familiar to Harry's nearest friends.

Harry, meanwhile, was peacefully asleep, unconscious of the hopeless musing of his sister, as she sat by the window not long after sunrise, doing this sad piece of work for him, and of the gloom which he cast over the happier mind of his friend ; a common case—almost too common to need recording.

It was the afternoon before Charteris left his inn to seek the house of Alexander Muir. In the intermediate time he had been wandering about the town, and hunting through one old churchyard



which lay in his way for the graves of the Allenders; but his search was not successful. The afternoon was bright and warm, the month being now far advanced, and he was directed easily to the residence of the old man whom everybody seemed to know. It was in one of the quiet back streets of the town, a narrow-causewayed lane, kept in a kind of constant twilight by the shadows of tall houses. The house he sought was not tall—its low door opened immediately from the rough stones of the street; and on either side was a square window fortified with strong panes of greenish glass, which gave a hue by no means delightful to the little checked-muslin blinds within. The upper story was a separate house, and had an outside stair ascending to it, which stair darkened the lower door, and served as a sort of porch, supported on the further side by a rude pillar of mason-work. Cuthbert

thought it a very dim dusky habitation for the gentle uncle of the Muirs.

A little maid-servant, with a striped red and black woollen petticoat and "short gown" of bright printed cotton, opened the door for him. Descending a single step, Cuthbert entered a narrow passage, at the end of which was another open door, with a bright prospect of trees and flowers, and sunshine beyond. The lobby was paved with brick, very red and clean, which the little servant seemed just to have finished scouring; and an open door on one side of it gave him a glimpse of a trim bed-chamber, with flowers on its little dressing-table; on the other side was another door (closed) of another bedroom; and, looking to the garden, the kitchen and the little parlour occupied the further side of the house.

"Will ye just gang in, sir," said the girl, removing her pail out of Cuthbert's

way ; “ ye’ll get him in the garden himself.”

Cuthbert obeyed, and passed by himself to the other door.

A very singular scene awaited him there. The garden was a large one, and formed the greatest possible contrast to the dusky front of the house. Apple trees in full blossom, and a bright congregation of all the flowers of spring, surrounded the more homely produce in which the large enclosure seemed rich. The door was matted round with climbing plants, roses, and honey-suckles, which, in a month or two, would be as bright and fragrant as now they were green ; and a splendid pear-tree, flushed with blossom, covered one entire side of the house.

But the animate part of the picture was still more remarkable—scattered through the garden in groups, but principally here near the door where some fine trees sheltered, and the sun shone upon them, were

a number of girls, from fourteen to twenty, working the Ayrshire work as it is called—to wit, the fine embroideries on muslin, which the Muirs “opened”—and talking, as girls generally talk, very happily and gaily—with snatches of song, and pleasant laughter. They had all the average good looks, and were dressed becomingly, as girls in their class, who maintain themselves by needlework, generally are. Completely astonished at first, Cuthbert became amused and interested in the scene as he stood a moment unperceived at the door, especially when, through the embowering leaves, he caught a glimpse of the person he had come to see.

He was a little spare man, with hair nearly white, and a hale ruddy cheek. Seated in an arm-chair, in front of his parlour window, with a book in his hand, it was very evident that the good man's book had very little share of his attention. At present he was telling a story to his

audience ; and Cuthbert admired the natural eloquence, the simple grace of language, in which he clothed it. His speech was quite Scottish, and even a little provincial, but untainted with the least mixture of vulgarity ; and when he had rounded his tale with a quotation from Burns, he opened the book in which he had been keeping his place with his finger, only to close it again immediately, when a new demand was made upon his attention.

“ Eh, Mr. Muir,” said one of the girls, “ what for have ye such lots of horse-gowans yonder in the corner ? ”

“ They’re no horse-gowans, Beatie, my woman—they’re camomile,” said the old man.

“ And what is’t for ? is it for eating ? ” asked the curious Beatie.

“ It’s for making drinks for no weel folk,” volunteered a better-informed companion.

“It’s for selling to John Wilson, the man that has taken up physie at his own hand,” said the chairman of this strange assembly. “They tell me he’s a friend of Dr. Hornbook’s; you’ve all read of Dr. Hornbook in Burns.”

There was a general assent; but some, among whom was the Beatie aforesaid, looked wistful and curious, and had not heard of that eminent personage.

“It’s a profane thing, a profane thing,” said Alexander Muir. “Keep to the Cottar, like good bairns. Ye’ll get no ill out of it. But what ails ye, Beatie, my woman?”

“Eh, sir, it’s a gentleman,” said Beatie, under her breath. Whereupon there ensued a dead silence, and a fit of spasmodic industry came upon the girls, occasionally interrupted by a smothered titter, as one of the more mischievous, who sat with her back to the door, tempted to laughter her companions, whose downcast faces were towards the stranger.

Cuthbert introduced himself in a few words, and was heartily greeted by the old man. "I have an obligation to you, sir, as well as the rest of them, for your care of Harry," said the uncle; "and ye left them well? They are my family, these bairns, an old solitary man as I am, and their friends are most welcome to me."

"You seem to have another family round you here," said Cuthbert, looking with a smile on the demure group before him, some of whom were painfully suppressing the laugh which they could not altogether conceal.

"Neighbours' bairns," said Alexander Muir; "bits of innocent things that have not the freedom of a garden like mine at home. There is a kind of natural kin between them and the spring. I like to see them among my flowers, and I think their work gets on all the better, that they are cheery in the doing of it; but to

tell you the truth, I cannot see, Mr. Charteris, how our own bairns should think themselves better in Glasgow than with me, now that Harry has gotten a wife."

"They wish to remain together, I fancy," said Cuthbert, sadly remembering the bitter tie which kept them beside poor Harry; "but both for health and happiness, Mr. Muir, I should fancy they would be better with you."

"Say you so?" said the old man, eagerly, "for happiness; aye, say you so?"

Cuthbert hastened to explain away, so far as he could, the painful meaning of his words, leaving it to be inferred that it was only the fresh air and freedom of this pleasant place, of which they stood in need.

"I am going in for a while with this gentleman," said uncle Sandy, raising his voice as he turned to his little congregation; "but mind there is no need for you turning idle because I am not here



to look after you ; mind and be eident, as the cotter's bairns were bidden to be."

The girls acknowledged the smiling speech addressed to them by great demonstration of industry, and for a few minutes the blue stamped leaves and branches of their muslin grew into white embroidery with wonderful speed. The old man looked round upon them with a smile, as they sat bending down their heads under the glistening sunshine over their pretty work, and then, laying his book on his chair, he led the way into the house.

The parlour was a very small one, considerably less than the best bed-room, which occupied the front of the house, and which, by an occupant of less poetic taste, would have been made the sitting-room. But Alexander Muir did not like the dull prospect of the little back street ; he preferred to look out upon the garden in which so much of his time was spent,

and the little room was large enough for all his quiet necessities.

His old easy chair had been removed from the fireside corner to the window. It was a latticed window, furnished with a broad shelf extending all the length of its deep recess, which seemed to have been made for plants—but no plants interposed themselves between the sun-shine and the books, which were the best beloved companions of the old, gentle, solitary man. Cuthbert looked at them as they lay in little heaps in the corner of the window. There was no dust about them, but almost as little arrangement. They lay, as their contents lay in the head of their good master, mingled in pleasant friendliness. The *Fourfold State* and the *Crook in the Lot* embraced the royal sides of Shakspeare, and a much-used copy of Burns lay peacefully beside the Milton, which, to tell truth, opened more easily at *Comus* or at

Il Penseroso than in either Paradise. Besides these there were Cowper and Young, an odd volume of the Spectator, an old time-worn copy of the Pilgrim, with Samuel Rutherford's Letters, and Fleming, the interpreter of prophecy, and the quaint Willison ballasting some volumes of Scott and Galt. Daily friends and comrades were these, bearing marks of long and frequent use, some of them encased in homely covers of green cloth, which the old man's own careful hands had endued them with; some half bound, after his fashion, with stripes of uncultivated "calf" defending their backs, and their boards gay with marbled paper. It was pleasant to see them, in their disarrangement, upon the broad ledge of the window, friends too intimate and familiar to be kept on ceremonious terms.

"Take a seat, Mr. Charteris," said uncle Sandy; "if you had come while Harry was here it might have been pleasanter for

you—for Harry, poor man, is a blithe companion ; maybe over blithe sometimes for his own well-doing: And you think the bairns would be better with me?”

“Nay,” said Charteris, hastily, “except in so far as this house of yours, Mr. Muir, is certainly a most pleasant contrast to the din and haste of Glasgow, and your nieces, you know, like your young friends yonder, are of kin to spring.”

The old man had seated himself in his easy chair, which Cuthbert would not take. He took off his spectacles to wipe them with his handkerchief, and shook his head. “There is Rose, to be sure, and little Lettie ; but my niece, Martha, Mr. Charteris—well, I cannot tell—the spring may come to her yet after the summer has passed. I would not put the bondage of common use about Martha, for the like of me is little able to judge the like of her. It is a hard thing to understand. It might have been a question in the days of

the auld philosophy—what for the mind that would have served a conqueror should be put into her—a mind that can ill bow to the present yoke—when there is even too much need of such in high places. It will be clear enough some time—but it has aye been a wonder to me.”

“ There may be difficulties in her way to conquer, more hopeless than kingdoms,” said Cuthbert involuntarily.

“ Young man, do you ken of any evil tidings,” asked Alexander Muir, with sudden haste and energy.

“ Nothing, nothing,” said Cuthbert, annoyed at himself for speaking words from which inferences so painful could be drawn—“ You must hear my special mission to Ayr, Mr. Muir. Your niece has told me that the name of her grandmother was Allenders—it is an unusual name—Could you give me any information about the family.”

The old man looked considerably sur-

prised. "They were strangers here," he said. "I mind of Mrs. Calder, very well, whose daughter Violet married James Muir, my brother. He was ten years younger than me, and so I mind of his good-mother, though she died long ago. They came from London, Mr. Charteris. There was a father and two daughters in the family. I will let you see all that remains of them—their grave."

"And are there no papers—no way of tracing the family to their origin," said Cuthbert, with some uneasiness.

"We have never thought it of any importance," said the old man, smiling, "if it is, we may fall on some means maybe. It sharpens folk's wits to have something to find out—but what depends on it, Mr. Charteris."

"I have said nothing of it to our friends in Glasgow—fearing that the name might have misled me," said Cuthbert, "but there is, I am glad to tell you, an estate

depending upon it—not a great one, Mr. Muir—a comfortable small estate producing some four hundred pounds a-year.”

Cuthbert wanted to be rather under than over the mark—four hundred pounds a-year! the sum was princely and magnificent to the astonished old man. He looked at Cuthbert in a mist of bewilderment. He took off his spectacles and wiped their glasses again. He put up his hand to his head, and rubbed his forehead in confused amazement. “Four hundred pounds a-year!”

“So far as I have gone yet, it seems almost certain that your nephew is the heir,” said Cuthbert. “The surname of itself is much, and the Christian names confirm its evidence very strongly. If you think there can be anything done to trace the origin of these Allenders, I should be glad to proceed to it at once.”

The old man had bowed down his head—he was fumbling now with nerveless



fingers at his glasses, and suddenly he raised the handkerchief with which he had been wiping them, up to his eyes. Some sounds, Cuthbert heard, like one or two broken irrepressible sobs, "For Harry—for the unstable callant—the Lord's grace to save him from temptation—that I should live to see this hope!"

The short broken sobs continued for a moment, and then he raised his head. "I see, Sir," said the old man, with natural dignity, "that to thank you for troubling yourself in this way, with the humble concerns of these orphans, who can render you little in return, would be to hold you in less esteem than is your due. I take your service, as, if I had been as young and well endowed as you, I think I could maybe have rendered it—and now tell me what it is you want to discover—that I may further it, if I can, without delay."



## CHAPTER XII.

“What ! mine own boy ?”

ALMOST in Lindsay's words, Cuthbert told to the old man the story of the Allenders. He listened without making any remark, but evidently, as Cuthbert saw, with great attention.

“John Allenders—yes, that was the name,” he said, when his visitor had concluded. “And Violet and Rose—it looks like—very like, as if these bairns were the folk you seek. I pray heaven they may ; no for the siller,” continued the old man, turning back on his way to the pin

where hung his low broad-brimmed hat :  
“ no alone or even specially for the siller ;  
but for other matters, Mr. Charteris—other  
things of more concern to Martha and me,  
and the rest of them, too, poor things,  
than silver and gold ; though no doubt an  
honourable maintenance, no to say a  
grand independence like that, is to be  
thankfully received for itself, if we would  
not sin our mercies—and now, sir, I am  
ready.”

Charteris followed without any question.

The old man turned first to the garden door, and looked out. His young guests had slackened a little in their industry ; one of them sat solemnly in the arm-chair, reading with great emphasis from the book he had left. Another had thrown down her work to arrange in elaborate braids a favourite companion's hair ; and two or three other groups, with their heads close together, were discussing “ the

gentleman ;” and what could possibly be his errand with Maister *Meur*. “Bairns,” said the old man, looking out smilingly. With a sudden start the girls resumed their work, the occupant of the arm-chair threw down the book in great haste, and fled to her own seat.

“The book will do ye no harm ; ye may read it out loud, one at a time,” said the gracious patron of the young embroiderers ; “but see that you do not forget what work must be done, or make me forsworn of my word, when I promised to see ye keep from idleness. Mind ! or we will cast out the morn.”

Saying which, the old man turned to the street door, directing his little Jessie as he passed the kitchen, to have tea prepared with some ornamental additions to its ordinary bread and butter, which he specified in a whisper, exactly at six o’clock.

“And I have a spare room that you are

most kindly welcome to, if ye can put up with my small accommodations, Mr. Charteris," said the master of the little house, as they passed into the street; "but I see you are for asking where we are to go. There is one person in the town that may very likely help us, I think. She was aunt to my sister-in-law, that's now departed, and knew all about the Allenders. She is an old woman. I would not say, but she has the better of me by twenty years; but she's sharper at worldly business yet, than many folk in their prime. She has some bits of property and money saved that will come to the bairns no doubt some time, but the now she holds a firm grip, and is jealous of respect on the head of it. I will take it kind if ye will just grant her the bit little ceremony that has grown a necessity to her, Mr. Charteris. She is an aged woman, and it does not set youth ill to honour even the whims of gray hairs."

“ I shall be very careful,” said Cuthbert with a smile, for he did not think it needful to add that he was a very unlikely person to show any want of courtesy to the aged or the weak. •

They walked through the town somewhat slowly, for the old man paused now and then to point out with genuine pride and affection the notable things they passed. The polemic Brigs, the Wallace tower. His mild gray eye kindled as he reminded his visitor that this was doubly classic ground—the land of Wallace, and of Burns—of the old traditional hero whose mighty form looms over his country still, and of the unhappy poet whom the poor of Scotland cherish in their hearts.

Alexander Muir was one of those whose end of life seems almost as pure as its beginning. A spirit so blameless and placid, that we might almost think it had only been sent here, because it is a greater joy to be a man, and know by certain

experiment the wonderful mystery of redemption, than to be satisfied with such knowledge as the sinless in heaven can gain. It is happy for us, amid the dark records of common lives, that here and there God permits us one such man, born to be purer than his fellows; so much lower than the angels that the taint of native sin has come with him into the world—so much higher than they, that the mantle of the Lord has fallen upon him, and that he stands accepted in a holiness achieved by the Master and King of all. Lichened over with the moss of age, in quiet places here and there live gracious souls of this happy class, and Alexander Muir was one.

But very human was the pure unworldly spirit, deeply learned in the antiquities of the country, with which his very life seemed woven. Happily proud of all its fame and all its great men, and interested even in its prejudices, there could have

been found nowhere a guide more pleasant. Cuthbert and he insensibly began to use the language of intimates—to feel themselves old friends; and when the children in the streets came forward to pull the old man's skirts, and solicit his notice, the young one, impatient at first of the delay, became soon so much interested in the universal acquaintanceship of his cheerful companion, as to linger well pleased where he chose to linger. Almost every one who met them had a recognition respectful and kindly for uncle Sandy. His passage through the street was a progress.

“But we are putting off our time,” said uncle Sandy at last. “This way, Mr. Charteris.”

They were then in the outskirts of the town; before a two story house, of smaller proportions than his own, the old man at last concluded his walk. The door stood open, and the sanded passage leading to a

flight of stone stairs, floury and white with "camstane," proclaimed the house to have more occupants than one. A door opening into this passage gave them a glimpse of a family apartment, where the mother stood at an ample tub washing, while children of all sizes overflowed the limits of the moderately clean kitchen. This woman, Mr. Muir addressed kindly, inquiring after her exuberant family first, and then for Miss Jean.

"Ou ay, there's naething ails her," was the answer, given not without some seeming ill-humour. "I was paying her the rent yestreen. She's glegger about siller now, than ever I was a' my days; and as for gieing a bawbee to a wean, or an hour's mercy to a puir body, ye micht as weel move the heart o' a whinstane; no that we're needing ony o' her charity. I have a guid man to work for me, that has been even on seven year wi' ae maister, and there's no mony could say that; but it's



awfu' to see an auld body wi' such a grip o' the world."

Leaving Miss Jean's tenant, operating with angry energy upon the garments in her hands, they proceeded up the camstaned stair to the door of Miss Jean's own habitation. A very small girl, dressed in a remote and far-away fashion, with a thick cap covering her short-cut hair, admitted them, recognising the old man with a smile of evident pleasure, and looking with a little alarm at his companion.

"You will tell Miss Jean it's me, Katie, and a stranger gentleman I've brought to see her," said uncle Sandy; "and when is she to let you home to see your mother?"

"Whisht," said the little girl in a whisper; "she'll hear. She'll no let me at a'. Oh, if you would speak to her, uncle!"

"So I will, Katie, my woman," said the old man kindly, patting the head of the little drudge as she showed them into a

front room ; “ and mind you and be a good bairn in the mean time, and dinna be ill to her, even if she is ill to you : and now you must tell Miss Jean.”

The child lingered a moment. “ If ye please, uncle—maybe she’ll no let me speak to you after—is Lettie ever coming back again ?”

“ Maybe, my dear ; there’s no saying,” said uncle Sandy. “ I will try if she can come to see you, or maybe I will take you to see her ; but, Katie, my woman, you must tell Miss Jean.”

*Calder*  
The little girl went away with a lighter step. “ She is a faraway cousin,” said the old man, “ a fatherless bairn, poor thing, needing whiles to eat bitter bread ; if our bairns come to their kingdom they must take Katie Calder. I think the blood is warmer on our side of the house ; any way none of them will grudge the bit lassie her upbringing.”

Miss Jean Calder’s best room was fur-

nished with a set of old lugubrious mahogany chairs, and a solemn four-posted bedstead, with terrible curtains of heavy dark moreen. Neither the bed nor the room were ever used, the other apartment serving all purposes of kitchen, parlour, and sleeping-room to its aged mistress and her little handmaiden. They could hear sounds of some little commotion in it, as they sat down to wait. Miss Jean had preparations to make before she could receive visitors.

At last, having completed these, she entered the room. She was a tall and very meagre old woman, with very false black hair smoothed over the ashy wrinkled brow of extreme age, and a dirty cap of white net, hastily substituted for the flannel one in which she had been sitting by the fireside in the other room ; an old, dingy, much-worn shawl and a rustling black silk apron covered the short-comings of her dress ; but underneath the puckers of her

eye-lids, keen, sharp, frosty eyes of blue looked out with undiminished vision ; and, but for the pinched and grasping expression which seemed to have settled down upon them, there would have been intelligence still in the withered features, which once, too, had had their share of beauty. Some one says prettily that Nature, in learning to make the lily, turned out the convolvulus. One may trace something like this in the character of a family as it descends from one generation to another, as if, the idea of a peculiar creation once taken up, experiments were made upon the race, and gradations of the mind to be produced, were thrown, first into one position and then another, until the climax was put upon them all by the one commanding spirit in which the design was perfected. It is not uncommon. Miss Jean Calder was a lesser and narrower example of the mind of Martha Muir ; eager in her young days to raise herself

above her comrades, she had repelled with disdain the neighbours' sons, who admired her; while yet she resented bitterly the neglect with which her honest wooers avenged themselves afterwards for her disdain. Then the selfish, fiery, proud woman began with firm industry to make a permanent provision for herself; and from that early period until about two years before this time, she had toiled early and late, like the poorest of labouring men. All that might have been generous and lofty—if there ever was such admixture in the ambition and pride of her youth—had evaporated long ago; a tyrant of unbending will in her small dominion—a hard, grasping, pitiless creditor to the miserable tenants who happened to be in her power—an unhappy spirit, clinging to the saddest dross of worldliness, she had become.

A sad object—but yet standing, to the mind of Martha Muir—if we may venture

so to speak of the working of Him who creates all—in the relation of a study to a great painting—a model to a finished statue.

“Good morning to ye, Alexander Muir,” said Miss Jean, “who’s this ye’ve brought in your hand?”

“The gentleman is from Edinburgh, Miss Jean,” said Alexander. “He is a friend of Harry’s, and has been kind to him, as most folk are, indeed, who ken the lad.”

“I tell ye, Sandy, ye have made a fuil of that boy,” said the old woman harshly; “a wasterful spendthrift lad that would throw away every bawbee that he had, and mair, that he hasna; but he needna look to sorn on me if ever he comes to want. I have nae mair than I can do wi’ mysel: and where’s my twenty shillings, guid white monie, that I gied to fit him out?”

“He will pay it back some day, no fear,” said Alexander, “for I hear from

this gentleman that Harry is like to prosper, poor man, and no doubt he will mind his friends, Miss Jean. The gentleman has been speaking to me of your guid sister, John Calder's wife. He thinks he kens some good friends she had. Did you ever hear what part that family came from?"

"Ay, good friends? where are they? what's like to come o't?" said Miss Jean, fixing the frosty eyes, whose keen light contrasted so strangely with her ashy wrinkled face, on Cuthbert.

"I cannot tell," said Cuthbert, warily, "it depends entirely upon what relationship I may discover—but it may be good for those who were kind to the Allenders, Miss Calder, if I find that they were relatives of the family I suppose."

"Kind to the Allenders? Do you ken, lad, that it was *my* mother took them in, when their father died, and the poor things hadna a mortal to look after them?—kind

to the Allenders, said he?—weel, weel—  
puir bairns, they're baith gane."

Something human crossed the sharp  
pinched selfish face—even in this degraded  
spirit, there was a memory of the fragrant  
far away youth.

"And Mr. Charteris," said Alexander  
Muir, "would like to ken where they  
came from, Miss Jean—it is weel kent  
how good ye were to the orphans—I am  
meaning your mother—and no doubt you  
ken better about them than indifferent  
folk;—that was the way I troubled you,  
and brought Mr. Charteris this length."

"Wha's Mr. Charteris?"

"It's the gentleman," said the old man  
simply.

"If they left any papers," interposed  
Cuthbert, "or books, or any relics indeed  
from which we might discover their origin  
—I should feel it a great obligation, Miss  
Calder, if you would assist me to trace  
it."



“Obligation! I have little broo of obligation,” said the old woman with a grating laugh, mingled of harshness and imbecility. “I have seen ower mony folk that I obliged, slip away out of my hand like a knotless thread; but is there anything like to come of it? I dinna ken this stranger lad—I can put trust in you, Alexander Muir—that is in what you *say*, ye ken.”

“Well, Miss Jean, it depends upon what the gentleman finds out,” said the old man, a little proud of his tactics, and marvelling within himself at his own address, “if he can be satisfied by means of any papers or books or such like—I believe something good may come of it.”

The old woman wavered. “It’s a hantle trouble,” she said, “to put a frail woman like me to, that have but a little monkey of a lassie to help me in the house,—but there *is* a kist ben yonder in below the bed—and there may be some

bits of things in it—I dinna ken—but neither her nor me are fit to pull it out.”

“ Can I help?” said Cuthbert, hurriedly.

“ Ye’re unco ready wi’ your offer, lad,” said Miss Jean, grimly, “ it’s no for love o’ the wark, I judge, wi’ thae bit white lassie’s fingers—look at mine,” and she extended a long shrivelled hand, armed like the claws of a bird, “ na, na, I ken naething about you—but if Katie and you can manage it, Sandy Muir—and she’s a fusionless brat, no worth the half of the meat she eats—I’ll be nae hindrance—ye can try.”

## CHAPTER XIII.

“Oh, lean and covetous old age !—a winter unblessed, that blights where’er it touches.”

ALEXANDER MUIR instantly proceeded in great haste to the kitchen, whither Miss Jean suspiciously followed him. In a few minutes Cuthbert heard “the kist” making audible progress—and a very short time after, the old man called him out to the passage, between the two rooms, whither they had dragged it.

“Ye’re giving yoursel a hantle fash wi’ a thing that can never do you ony good, Sandy,” said Miss Jean tauntingly,

“ for the Allenders were nae connexion to you, even though Violet Calder did marry your brother Jamie—Weel I wat she would have been better wanting him. It’s a bonnie story when its telled—a woman to live as lang as fifty year, and syne to die because her man died—auld taupie ! when she might have been to the fore to have a share of the benefit, if there is to be ony benefit—what ailed the fuil to dee ? ”

“ Poor woman, she would have been blithe to remain, for the bairns’ sakes,” said the old man, gently, “ if it had not been otherwise ordained.”

“ Weel, there’s the fewer to pairt it among, if onything comes o’ this,” said the miser. “ Ye maun just stand back awee, my man. I dinna open a’ my posies afore fremd folk ; and ye’re no to think the Allenders left as muckle behind them, claithes and a’ thegither, as would fill the half o’ that kist. What there is,

I'll bring ye, but I'll hae nae stranger meddling wi' my gear."

Cuthbert withdrew as he was ordered, to the door of the "best room." The chest was a large one, painted a dull brown colour, and judging from its broken lock, contained nothing of any value. The old woman raised the lid, and dived into a wilderness of lumber, faded worn out cobweb-like garments, long ago unfit for use, but preserved nevertheless on the penurious principle of throwing nothing away. After long fishing among these relics of ancient finery, Miss Jean at last produced from the very bottom of the abyss, a small quarto Bible in a dark decayed binding, much worn at the corners. "Here!" she said, abruptly, handing it to Cuthbert, "ye can look at that, and I'll see if there's ony mair—there should be some papers in the shottle."

Cuthbert hastily returned to the window to examine the book; on the fly leaf was

written simply the name of John Allenders, a remote date, and a text. It gave no further clue to its owner's identity.

"Have ye gotten onything, Mr. Charteris?" asked anxiously the old man at his side. Cuthbert could only shake his head as he turned over the dark old pages and looked for farther information in vain.

The Bible contained, as all Bibles do in Scotland, the metrical version of psalms sanctioned by the Kirk, and between the end of the New Testament and the beginning of these, it is customary to have the family register of births and deaths. Cuthbert turned hastily to this place; at first he concluded there was no entry, but on further examination, he found that two leaves had been pasted together, and that on the outer side of one something was written. He looked at it, "Behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke," was the melancholy

inscription ; and the handwriting was stiff and painful and elaborate, most like the hand of bitter grief. There were mistakes too and slips of the mournful pen. Cuthbert felt it move him greatly—so strange it seemed to see the mark of the faltering hasty fingers, which so long ago were at rest for ever.

One of the leaves had been a good deal torn in a vain endeavour to open this sealed record. Cuthbert feeling himself growing excited and anxious, with the wished for evidence so very near him, made other attempts which were as unsuccessful. The dead man had shut up the chronicle of his happier days that he might not see it in his desolation, and the jealous grief seemed to linger about it as its guardian still.

Cuthbert held it up to the light and endeavoured to read through, but with as little success as before. Alexander Muir had been watching him anxiously. There

was a glass of water on the table, which Katie had brought for him; the old man wet his handkerchief, and with trembling hands spread it upon the hidden page.

“ I dinna ken what a’ thae papers are,” said Miss Jean, entering with a bundle of yellow letters tied together with a strip of old linen as yellow as themselves, “ but there’s nae secrets in them, ye may look over them as ye like. What are ye doin’ to the book ? ”

“ There’s something written here,” said the old man, endeavouring vainly to conceal his anxiety.

“ Ane wad think there was a fortune coming to *you*, Sandy Muir,” said Miss Jean, “ ye’re unco anxious to bring profit to other folk.”

“ I aye wished weel to my neighbours,” said Alexander, meekly, and with a little self-reproach. He felt as if it were almost selfish to be so anxious about his nephew’s fortune.



In the meantime Cuthbert untied the string, and as the too jealous gum showed yet no indication of yielding, began to look over the papers. The first that came to his hands, evidently added by Miss Jean to the original heap, and ostentatiously displayed on the top, was an account for the funeral expenses of John Allenders, in which Mrs. Calder appeared debtor to William Lochhead, undertaker; unfortunately Miss Jean had not observed the rigid honesty with which it was endorsed in a very cramped female hand, "Paid by me, out of the notes left by John Allenders for his burial, leaving a balance of three pounds and a penny halfpenny for the behoof of Rose and Violet. Signed—Margaret Calder."

Other tantalizing bits of writing were below this; a child's note signed Violet, and addressed to the father in some temporary absence from home, telling how Rose had began to "flower" a collar, and

how the writer herself had bought seeds with her sixpence for Mrs. Calder's garden. Another bit of paper contained a list, in a hand more formed, of different articles of "flowering," received from some warehouse. Then there were school accounts, for the girls, of a still earlier date, and at last Cuthbert came to a letter bearing the postmark of London and Stirling. He opened it in haste. It was a letter of commonplace condolence, beginning, "My dear Sir," and suggesting the ordinary kind of consolation for the loss of "my dear departed sister," and was signed by "Daniel Scott." Lindsay had not mentioned the surname of the wife of John Allenders—this letter was evidently from her brother.

Cuthbert went on with great anxiety, and very considerable excitement, just glancing up to see that the softening process carried on by Alexander Muir had not yet produced much effect, and taking

no part in the conversation. The next letter in the bundle was in the same hand, and in its substance little more interesting; but its postscript brought a flush of satisfaction to Cuthbert's eager face.

"I hear that your father is but weakly," wrote the matter-of-fact Daniel, "and your brother Gilbert being dead two months ago, as you were informed, has sent for Walter—that's the captain—home. If you were asking my opinion, I would say you should certainly come back to be at hand whatever might happen; for when once trouble comes into a family, there is no saying where it may end; and, after your father, and Walter, and Robert, there is no doubt that you are the right heir."

This letter had been torn up as if in indignation of the cold-blooded counsel. Cuthbert laid it aside as a link in the chain which he had to form.

"I'll no have the book destroyed wi'

weet. I tell ye, I winna, Sandy Muir," said Miss Jean, extending her lean brown hand. "Let it abee wi' your napkin. I wonder that the like o' you, that pretends to be better than your neighbours, could gie such usage to the Scripture. Think shame o' yourself, man; and be done wi' your slaistering."

The old man thrust her hand away with less than his usual mildness. "Have patience a moment—just have patience. See, Mr. Charteris, see!"

Cuthbert rose—the leaves came slowly separate—and there in this simple record was all he sought.

"John Allenders, writer, fourth son of Gilbert Allenders, of Allenders, married, on the first day of March, 1769, to Rose Scott, daughter of Thomas Scott, builder, Stirling."

Cuthbert laid down the book on the table, and, extending his hand, took the somewhat reluctant one of the anxious

old man, and shook it heartily. "It's all right," said Cuthbert, swinging the arm of uncle Sandy in unusual exhilaration. "It's all right. I have nothing to do but congratulate you, and get up the proof. I thought we would find it, and here it is as clear as daylight. It's all exactly as it should be."

"What is right? what's the lad meaning?" said Miss Jean, thrusting herself in between them; "and what are ye shaking hands wi' that foolish body Sandy Muir for, when it's me that ony thing belonging to the Allenders should justly come to? We keepit them here in our ain house; we gied the auld man decent burial as ye would see, and it's out of my book ye have gotten a' ye ken. What does the man mean shaking hands wi' Sandy Muir?"

"It's no for me—it's for the bairns—it's for Harry," said Alexander.

"Hairy! and what has Hairy to do wi't, I would like to ken? He's but a

far-away friend; forbye being a prodigal, that it wad be a shame to trust guid siller wi'—Hairy!—the man's daft! what has he to do with John Allenders?"

"A little," said Cuthbert, smiling. "He is the *heir* of John Allenders, Miss Calder."

"The heir!" the old woman's face grew red with anger. "I tell ye he had nae lawful heir, if it binna the ane surviving that did him kindness. It's you that disna ken. Hairy Muir is but niece's son to me."

"But he is grandson to Rose Allenders," said Cuthbert, "and the heir of her father."

Miss Jean stood still for a moment, digesting the strange purport of those words; at last she stretched forward her hand to clutch the Bible. "The book's mine—ye ken nocht but what ye have gotten out of my book—gie it back to me, ye deceivers. Am I gaun to gie my goods,

think ye, to better Hairy Muir? Na, na, —ye have come to the wrang hand; give me back my book.”

“There is some property in the case,” said Cuthbert, keeping his hand upon the Bible: “It cannot come to you, Miss Jean; for, though I believe you were very kind to them, you are not related to John Allenders; but Harry Muir is. Now, whether would it be better that this property should go to a stranger, or to your nephew who is in your debt?”

Miss Jean had been eager to interrupt him, but his last words were a weighty utterance. She paused to consider. “Ye’re a clever chield,” she said at last, with a harsh laugh. “I wadna say but ye could put a case gey weel. My nephew that’s in my debt—and so he is, that’s true—what kind o’ property is’t? ye’ll be a writer, I reckon?”

“Yes,” said Cuthbert, with a smile, “I am a writer. It is some land—a small

estate, Miss Jean ; but only one who is a descendant of John Allenders, can be the heir, and that is Harry Muir."

"Weel, I take ye to witness that what ye have said is true," said the old woman eagerly ; "that this lad is in my debt ; and payment I'll hae afore he bruiks the possession a week. Wasna it out of my book ye got a' ye ken ? and wha has sae muckle claim to consideration as me ? I take ye to witness ; and you, ye auld sneck-drawer—it was this ye was thinking about a' the time ?—Oh Sandy Muir ! me, in my innocence, thinking ye were taking this pains to do me a guid turn : as ye're awn me a day in harst, a'body kens ; and you thinking o' yoursel a' the time. I wonder ye can have the face to look at me !"

"I am seeking nothing for mysel, Miss Jean," said Alexander, with a little pride, "the little I have will soon go to the bairns, as this will do. And I am thank-



ful to say I owe ye nothing, if it be not in the way of good will."

"Guid will, said he! bonnie guid will to take a braw inheritance out frae under my very een," said the old woman, bitterly. "I haud ye bound for the value of that book, Sandy Muir, mind. I'll haud ye bound, and you too, my braw lad; sae if ye tak it away the noo ye sall bring it back again, or it will be a' the waur for yoursels. Mind what I say; I'll hae my goods spoiled and my gear lifted for nae man in this world."

Cuthbert promised, with all reverence, to restore the Bible, which he had considerable fears he would not be permitted to take away; and after they had soothed, so far as was possible, her bitter humour, Miss Jean, with as much courtesy as she was capable of, suffered them, rich in these precious documents, to depart.

"I'll no can speak to Miss Jean to day, Katie," whispered uncle Sandy, as the

little girl stole after them down stairs ;  
“ but keep you a good heart, my bonnie woman, there’s blythe days coming—and may be I’ll take ye to see your mother myself.”

“ Are you sure this will do, Mr. Charteris ?” continued the old man, when they were again on their way to the town.

Cuthbert was in great spirits. “ I will astonish Davie Lindsay,” he said, smiling. “ Oh yes, it will do, it was just the thing I wanted. Now we must have the register of the different marriages and births ; that part of it will be easily managed, I fancy.”

“ My brother James’s Family Bible is in my house,” said uncle Sandy, “ and he was married by Mr. Clunie, of the Old Kirk. I will go to the session clerk to-night, if you like, or it will be time enough the morn. He is never far out of the way, being an old man like myself, half idle, half independent. And, speak-

ing of that, ye must see my garden, Mr. Charteris, though this is hardly the best time."

"You seem to keep it in excellent order," said Cuthbert.

"It's no bad; you see, Mr. Charteris, the house is my own, and so is it," said the old man, with a little natural pride, desiring to intimate that the substance was not altogether on the Calder side of Harry's ancestry; "and it is just a pleasure to me to dibble at it in my own way. Indeed I think sometimes that it's this work of mine, and the pleasure of seeing the new life aye coming up through the soil, that makes me like the bairns so well."

"It has not always so pleasant a result," said Charteris.

"Mostly, I think, mostly," said Alexander. "For example, now, how could ye think a man that had such thoughts in his heart to a mouse or a gowan, as Burns had, could harm or be unkindly to the bits of

buds of his own race ; though to be sure I am not minding what a strong part evil had in that grand earthen vessel. Woes me ! that what might have been a great light in the land should be but a beacon on the black rocks ; but I never mind that when I read the Cottar."

" The Cottar is your favourite, I think," said Charteris.

" Aye—I confess I like them all, ill as some of them are," said the poet's countryman ; " but the Cottar is near perfect to my vision—all but one place, where he puts in an apostrophe that breaks the story—that about ' Sweet Jenny's unsuspecting youth'—you mind? I aye skip that. He kent ill ower weel, poor man."

## CHAPTER XIV.

“ Here hath been dawning  
Another blue day.”

CARLYLE.

THE next morning, Cuthbert busied himself in obtaining extracts from registers. The proof he procured was very full and clear, establishing the legal as well as the moral certainty.

That day the family at Port Dundas were pursuing their ordinary employments with a greater hush and stillness about them than usual. Martha and Rose sat together, sewing in the parlour. They were both very silent—in the exhaustion

of hopelessness, afraid to speak to each other of the one great subject which absorbed their thoughts. Agnes had gone with her baby in her arms to the kitchen to speak to Mrs. Rodger, and was lingering there a little, willing to be delivered from herself; while Violet had carried out a little wondering pre-occupied heart into the midst of a juvenile assembly in front of the house, and was gradually awaking out of abstraction into vigorous play.

The prospect was very cheerful from the window. Yonder little Maggie McGilivray, with unfailing industry, clipped and sang at her mother's door under the full sunshine of noon; and here, upon the pavement, the little form of Violet, poised on one foot, pursued the marble "pitcher" through the chalked "beds" necessary for the game, while her playmates stood round watching lest she should infringe its rules, and Mrs. McGarvie's tawny truculent Tiger winked in the sunshine as he sat compla-

cently looking on. The very din of traffic in the busy street was cheering and life-like; but the two sisters, sat with their little muslin curtain drawn, sick at heart.

At the window in the kitchen Miss Aggie Rodger stretched her considerable length upon the deal table, while the hapless idle Johnnie occupied his usual chair by the fireside, and Miss Jeanie in a dress a little, and only a little, better arranged than her sister, sat on the wooden stool near her, very prim and very busy. Miss Aggie had laid down her work, and from the table was making desperate lunges at the crowing baby.

In a dingy printed gown, girded round her waist by an apron professedly white, but as dingy as the print, and with a broad black ribbon tyeing down her widow's cap, Mrs. Rodger stood conversing with the lodger. "This is Thursday," said Agnes, "by the end of next week, Mrs. Rodger, I shall be ready with the rent."

“ Very weel, Mrs. Muir,” responded the widow, “ what suits you will suit me. It’s a new thing to me, I assure you, to be needing to seek siller. When Archie was to the fore—and a guid man he was to me, and a guid father to the weans—I never ance thought of such a needcessity as this; but ane maun submit to what’s imposed; and then there’s thae wearifu’ taxes, and gas, and water. I declare it’s enough to pit folk daft—nae suner ae body’s turned frae the door than anither chaps—it’s just an even down imposition.”

“ Look at the pet—Luick, see! eh! ye wee rogue, will ye break my side comb,” cried Miss Aggie, shaking the baby with furious affection, from which the young mother shrunk a little.

“ Dinna be sae wild, Aggie,” said her prim sister. “ Ye’ll frighten the wean.”

“ Never you fash your head, Jean. Are ye there, ye wee pet? Eh, if he hasna pitten his finger through yin o’ the holes!”



Miss Aggie hurriedly snatched up her work, and the little wife drew away the baby in alarm. "Has he done much harm," asked Agnes, "give it me, and I will put it in again."

"It's nane the waur," said the good-humoured hoyden, cutting out the injured "hole" with her scissors. "I'll put it in with a stitch of point—it's nae size. Jean's at a new stitch, Mrs. Muir—did ye ever see it?"

"It's rather a pretty thing," said Miss Jeanie, exhibiting it with prim complacence. "I learned it from Beenie Ure, at the warehouse, and it's no ill to do. I was thinking of coming ben, to show Miss Rose; but it's no every body that Beenie would have learned it to."

"Wha's that at the outer door?" asked the idle brother, whose listless unoccupied life had made him quick to note all passing sounds.

"Losh me!" said Miss Aggie, looking

up, "its Mr. Muir, and he's in an awfu' hurry."

Agnes ran to open the door. It was indeed Harry, and the face of pale excitement which he turned upon her, struck the poor wife to the heart. Little Violet ran up the stair after him, with eager curiosity. There was a sullenness, quite unusual to it, on the colourless face of poor Harry. He passed his wife without saying a word.

"Are you ill? what brings you home at this time? what is the matter, Harry?" cried the terrified Agnes.

He only pressed before her into the sitting-room.

As Harry entered, with Agnes and little Violet close behind him, the two melancholy workers in the parlour, started in painful surprise. "Harry is ill!" exclaimed Rose, with the constant instinct of apology, as she threw down her work on the table.

"What now, Harry? what new misfor-

tune has come upon us now?" asked the sterner voice of Martha.

"Harry, what is it? what ails you?" said poor Agnes, clinging to his arm.

He took off his hat, and began to press it between his hands. "Agnes, Martha," said the young man with a husky dry voice, "it's not my fault—not this time—I've lost my situation."

The little wife uttered a low cry, and looked at him and the baby. Lost his situation! the sole means of getting them bread.

"What do you mean, Harry?" asked Martha.

The young man's sullen, despairing eye glanced round them all. Then he flung his hat on the table, and threw himself into the arm-chair. "I mean that, that's all. I've lost my situation."

For a moment they stood still, looking in each other's blank faces, as people do at the first stroke of a calamity; then Agnes

put the baby into the arms of Rose, and herself glided round to the back of her husband's chair. She could not bear to see him cast himself down so, and hide his face in his hands. Her own eyes were half blinded with tears, and her gentle heart failing; but however she might suffer herself, she could not see Harry so utterly cast down.

Violet stole again to the stool at his feet, and sat looking up in his face with the breathless interest of her years. Poor Agnes tried to draw away the hands from his face. He resisted her fretfully. Rose went softly about the room with the child, hushing its baby glee, and turning tearful eyes on Harry; but Martha stood, fixed as she had risen on his entrance, her hands firmly grasping the back of her chair, and her head bowed down.

The tears of poor Agnes were falling upon his clasped fingers. Hastily the unfortunate young man uncovered his face.

“ I suppose I shall have to sit by the fire like John Rodger, and let you be a slave for me,” he exclaimed bitterly, clasping his wife’s hands. Agnes could do nothing but weep and murmur “ Harry ! Harry ! ”

“ I will work on the streets first—I will do anything,” said Harry, in hysteric excitement. “ I am not broken down yet, Agnes, for all they say. I can work for you yet. I will *be* anything, I will *do* anything, rather than let want come to *you*.”

And the little wife wept over the hands that convulsively clasped her own, and could only sob again, “ Oh, Harry, Harry ! ”

“ Harry,” said Martha, “ what have you done ? Let us understand it clearly. Answer first one thing. Lift up your head, and answer me, Harry. Is the fault yours ? Is it a misfortune or a sin ? ”

He did not meet her earnest, anxious eye; but he answered slowly, “ The fault is not mine, Martha. I was, indeed, exasperated;

but it was not me. I am free of this, Martha ; it was no blame of mine."

She looked at him with jealous scrutiny ; she fancied there was a faltering in his voice, and that he dared not lift his eyes to meet her own, and the misery of doubt convulsed Martha's heart. Could she believe him ?

" If it is so," she said, with a calmness which seemed hard and cold to Rose, " I see no reason you have to be so much cast down. Agnes, do not cry. This working on the street is quite an unnecessary addition to the shock Harry has given us."

" *If* it is so !" cried Harry, with quick anger. " Martha, do you not believe me ? will you not trust my word ?"

" Be composed," said Martha, herself sitting down with a hopeless composure quite unusual to her ; " tell us what the cause is calmly, Harry. It is a great misfortune ; but every misfortune is to be

borne. Let us look at it without exaggeration; tell me the cause."

He had worn her patience out, and the aspect her exhaustion took was that of extreme patience. It surprised and hushed them all. Rose laid the baby in his cradle, and stealthily took up her work. Agnes withdrew her hand from Harry's grasp; even he himself wiped his damp brow, and sat erect in his chair.

"I went to-day to the Bank to get a cheque cashed," he said, in his usual manner; "it was a small cheque, only fifty pounds, and I put the notes in my coat pocket. Everybody does it. I did in that respect just as I have always done; but I was robbed to-day—robbed of the whole sum."

"What then?" said Martha, breathlessly.

"Of course I went at once and told Dick Buchanan. His father is not at home, and Dick took it upon him to reprove me for carelessness, and—various



other things," said Harry, with assumed bravado. "So we got to high words—I confess it, Martha. I was not inclined to submit to that from him, which I could scarcely bear from you. And the result was what I have told you—I gave up my situation, or rather he dismissed me."

There was a dead silence, for Martha's composure hushed the condolences which otherwise would have comforted poor Harry, and made him feel himself a martyr after all.

"What did young Buchanan blame you for?—not," said Martha, a rapid flush covering her face as she looked at her brother, "not with any suspicion—not for *this*."

He returned her look with one of honest and unfeigned indignation. "Martha!"

"I did not know," said Martha hurriedly. "The lad is a coarse lad. I did not know what you meant. What did he blame you for, Harry?"



A guilty flush stole over Harry's face. He sighed deeply. "For many things, Martha," he said with simplicity, "for which you have blamed me often."

The stern questioner was melted. It was some time before she could resume her inquiries. "And how did it happen? How did you lose the money, Harry?" said Rose.

"It was no such wonder," answered Harry with a little impatience. "It is a thing that happens every day—at least many men have been robbed before me. They lie in wait about the banks, these fellows."

"And what way did you put it into your pocket, Harry?" said Violet. "I would have held it in my hand."

"Be quiet, Violet; what do you know about it?" exclaimed Harry angrily.

"And was it near the Bank you were robbed?" inquired Agnes.

Harry faltered a little. "Not very far from it."

"And did nobody see the thief? Surely if it was done in the open street, somebody must have seen who did it," said Rose.

Harry's eyes were cast down. "No," he muttered in a very low tone, "they know their business too well to let anybody see them."

"Was it done in the street?" asked Martha quickly.

He faltered still more. "I don't know—not exactly in the street, I think. I met the captain of one of our—of one of Buchanan's ships; and I—I went with him to a place he was going to call at. I suppose it might be done about there."

Poor Harry! his head was bowed down—his fingers were fumbling with the table-cover. He could not meet the eyes which were fixed so anxiously upon him.

A low groan came from Martha's lips—it was hard to relinquish the comfort

of believing that his besetting sin had no share in this misfortune—hard to have the courage quenched out of a heart, which could be buoyant, joyous, in the face of trials and dangers appointed by heaven, to be suffered and overcome—but who could do nothing against a weakness so inveterate and strong as this.

There was nothing more said for a time—they all felt this add a pang to their misfortune ; but while Martha's eyes were still fixed on the ground, and Rose and Agnes forbore to look at him, in delicate care for his humiliation, Harry had already lifted his head, and growing familiar with his position, forgot that there was in it any humiliation at all.

“I forgot to tell you,” he said, “what will be very hard upon us—very hard indeed—these monied men have hearts like the nether millstone. Agnes, I don't know what you will do with your accounts.

I have lost my quarter's salary as well as my situation."

The poor little wife looked at him aghast. She had been scheming already how she could get these accounts paid, and begin to "the opening" herself, to keep them afloat until Harry should hear of some other situation ;—but this crowning calamity struck her dumb.

"They will hold me responsible for the whole fifty pounds," said Harry, in a low voice. "I don't think Mr. Buchanan himself would have kept back this that is owing me—this that I have worked for. I should not care so much for the whole debt," said poor Harry with glistening eyes, "because it would be a spur to me to labour more strenuously, and I don't doubt we might pay it off in a year or two—but to throw me on the world, and keep back this poor fifteen pounds—it is very cruel—to leave us without anything

to depend on, until I can get another situation—it is very hard—but they do not know what it is to want five pounds, those prosperous men. Mr. Buchanan himself would never have done it—and to think that Dick should turn upon me !”

“It is well,” said Martha harshly, “I am pleased that he has kept this money—how we are to do I cannot tell—but I would not have had you take it, Harry. What you have lost was theirs, and we must make it up. Some way or other we will struggle through, and it is far better that you did not become further indebted to them by receiving this.”

Harsh as her tone was, it was not blame—poor Harry’s sanguine spirit rose. He could take some comfort from the bitter pride that would rather descend to the very depths of poverty than have such a debt as this. The galling burden seemed for the moment to withdraw Martha’s thoughts from the more-endur-

ing misery, the weakness that plunged him into so many misfortunes.

But Agnes, sadly considering how to satisfy the poor widow, Mrs. Rodger, who could not do without her money, and how to apologise to butcher, baker, and grocer, —could take no comfort;—darkly the cloud of grave care settled down upon the soft young features. “But what will I do with Mrs. Rodger,” said Agnes, “and Waters, and Mr. Fleming—oh Martha!”

“I will speak to them myself,” said Martha, compressing her lips painfully. “You shall not be subjected to this, Agnes—I will speak to them myself.”

“And Mrs. McGarvie,” said Agnes, “I might have done the things myself if I had only known—and Mrs. Rodger.”

“Mrs. Rodger must be paid,” said Martha. “I am going to the warehouse to-day—we must see—we must think about it all, Agnes.”

But they made no reference to Harry. Rose, who had said nothing all this time, was already working very rapidly, pausing for an instant sometimes to look round upon them with affectionate wistfulness, but scarcely slackening the speed of her needle even then; there was such occasion for labour now, as there had never been before.

Poor Harry! He sat in silence, and heard them discuss those sad economics—he saw that they made no reference to him; and the bitterness of having lost the confidence of those whose strong and deep affection could not be doubted, even by the most morbid pride, smote him to the heart. A momentary perception of his position disclosed itself to Harry, and with the instant spring of his elastic temperament, he felt that to perceive was to correct, and that the power lay with himself to recover all that he had lost.



With a sudden start he turned to his wife and his sister.

“Agnes!—Martha!—why do you look so miserable? I will get another situation. We may be better yet than we ever were before.”

“And so we may,” said Martha, pressing her hand to her forehead, “and so we may—we will always hope and look for the best.”

Her voice sounded like a knell. Agnes, who was not quick to discover shades of implied meaning, brightened at the words—but Rose, who deprecated and softened in other cases, could oppose nothing to this. It made herself sick and hopeless—for worse than all impatience or harshness was this conscious yielding to fruitless and false hope, as one yields to a fretful child.



## CHAPTER XV.

“ Now shall you see me do my daily penance.  
Mean, say you ?—’tis the grander suffering then.  
And thus I bear my yoke.”—

It had been Martha’s custom at all times to take upon herself the disagreeable things of their daily life. A turbulent stormy spirit, it was impossible to form any apprehension of her character without taking into account the harsh and strong pride which had come undiminished through all her trials;

“ — the spurns

Which patient merit of the unworthy takes,”—

the slights and trifling disrespects which are only felt by the refined poor—all

these petty indignities were bitter to Martha, yet she had a certain satisfaction in compelling herself to endure them. To stand among the indiscriminate host who maintained themselves as she did; to submit her work to the inspection of some small official; to listen patiently to comments upon it, made for the sake of preserving a needful importance and superiority; these and many a trifling insult more were very hard to bear—but there was a bitter pleasure in bowing to them, a stormy joy in the conscious force with which she subdued her own rebellious nature, and put her foot upon its neck. It was conquering her pride, she thought, and she conquered it proudly, using its own might to vanquish itself.

But though Martha could bear needful humiliations herself, this pride of hers, which enabled her to bear them, built a mighty wall round her children. She could not bear humiliation to brother or

sister ; they were hers—heart of her heart, crown of her honour—and with the constant watchfulness of jealous love she guarded them from derogation. With courage unfailing she could bear what was needful to be borne if it might be in her own person, but if it fell on them, the blow struck to her heart.

And so she passed through crowds of prosperous people, who never bestowed a second look upon her—a woman growing old, with grey streaks in her hair, and harsh lines in her face—a *poor* woman, distressed and full of care—what was there to look at? But if some magic had changed the bodily form, which was a veil to her, into the person of some noble despot king, foiled and despairing, there was enough to rivet the eyes of a world.

She was carrying back a fortnight's laborious work—and filling up all the interstices of the greater misery, which did not change, were a hundred shifting plans of

how to distribute this pittance. A strange chaos was in Martha's mind as she went through those crowded streets. Broken prayers, so often repeated that they came vacantly into her mind often, and often fell upon her like strong inspirations, forcing her almost to cry aloud in an agony of entreaty, mingled with those painful calculations of the petty sum she was about to receive, which hovered like so many irritating insects over the dull and heavy pain in her heart. The cloud would not disperse; the weight would not lighten from her. Harry, at home, had smiles of new confidence on his face already, and had talked Agnes and Rose into hope; but the days of hope were past for Martha. She desired to submit; she longed to bend her neck meekly under the yoke, and acquiesce in what God sent; but the struggle was hard, and it seemed to herself that she could have submitted easily to any affliction but this—this was

the intolerable pain—and this was her fate.

The warehouse was in the Candleriggs, and a spruce clerk received the work from her, and paid her the joint wages of Rose and herself for the fortnight's labour. It was thirty shillings—a very little sum, though they thought it good. On rare occasions the weekly produce of their united toil was as much as a pound, but this was a more usual amount.

Filling her little basket with the renewed and increased supply of work given at her request, Martha turned to one of the dim streets of counting-houses which surround the Exchange. In the same line of buildings the Buchanans had their office, but Martha was not going there. She ascended another dusty stair at some little distance, and entering a smaller office, asked for Mr. Sommerville.

Mr. Sommerville was a ruddy comfortable man, in an easy chair; once a poor

Ayrshire lad, now, totally forgetful of that time, a cautious, shrewd, wealthy merchant, richer than many of the splendid commercial magnates who lightened the dim sky around him. But some claim of distant kindred or ancient acquaintance connected him with the family of the Muirs; though his look of doubt as Martha entered, and his laconic greeting, "Oh, Miss Muir," when he recognised her, showed that this claim was of the slenderest kind.

"I have come to speak to you about my brother," said Martha, standing before him with a flush upon her face; "I mean I have taken the liberty, Mr. Sommerville—for Harry has lost his situation."

"What! the place I got for him in Buchanan's?" exclaimed the merchant. "What has he done that for? some misconduct I suppose."

"No misconduct," said Martha, with sudden courage; "nor have you the

slightest ground for supposing so. Harry had money stolen from him on his way between the bank and the office—a thing which no one could foresee, and which has happened to many a wiser man. This is the cause; but this is not misconduct.”

Mr. Sommerville waved his hand impatiently. “Yes, yes, I understand; I see. Money stolen from him: *I* never had money stolen from me. But I never will recommend a man again; they invariably turn out ill. How much was it?”

“Fifty pounds.” said Martha, “for all of which he is responsible, and, if he were but in another situation, which we would not fail to pay.”

“Oh yes, that’s all very well,” said the merchant, “but how is he to get the other situation? There must have been great carelessness, you know, or they never would have dismissed him. I heard he was wild; young Buchanan told me he

was wild—but I did not expect it was to end so soon.”

“And neither it shall,” said Martha, controlling, with absolute physical pain, the fierce hot anger of her mother-like love. “Mr. Buchanan has already taken from Harry a proportion of this sum. I pledge myself that the rest shall be paid.”

“You!” He looked at her. Certainly, her name would not have been of the smallest importance at a bill; but glimmerings of truth higher than bills, or money values, will flash sometimes even on stolid men. For a moment his eyes rested strangely upon her; and then he turned away his head, and said, “Humph!” in a kind of confidential under tone. The good man rubbed his bushy hair in perplexity. He did not know what to make of this.

“But unless Harry has employment we



can do nothing," said Martha, "all that is in our power, without him, must be the mere necessities of living. You have helped us before, Mr. Sommerville."

"If that was to be a reason for exerting myself again, in every case of distress that comes to me," said the merchant with complacency, "I can tell you, I might give up all other business at once; but recommending a man who turns out ill is a very unpleasant thing to creditable people. There is Buchanan now—of course he took my word for your brother—and I assure you I felt it quite a personal reflection when his son told me that Muir was wild."

"And his son dared!" exclaimed Martha, with uncontrollable indignation, "and this youth who does evil of voluntary intent and purpose is believed when he slanders Harry! Harry, whom this very lad—that he should have power, vulgar and coarse as he is, with a brother of mine!—has be-

trayed and beguiled into temptation. But I do wrong to speak of this. The present matter is no fault of Harry's, yet it is the sole reason why he loses his situation; and I see no ground here for any one saying that my brother has disgraced them."

Strong emotion is always powerful. It might be that Mr. Sommerville had no objection to hear Richard Buchanan condemned. It might be that Martha's fierce defence awoke some latent generosity in the mind she addressed. However that might be, the merchant did not resent her outburst, but answered it indistinctly in a low voice, and ended with something about "partiality," and "quite natural."

"I am not partial," said Martha hastily. "No one has ever seen, no one can ever see, Harry's faults as I do. I am not indifferent enough to pass over any one defect he has; but Harry is young. He has reached the time when men are but

experimenting in independent life. Why should he lose his good name for a common misfortune like this?"

"You should have stayed in Ayr," said Mr. Sommerville, with a little weariness. "*I don't want to injure his good name! I have no object in hurting your brother; indeed, for the sake of the old town, and some other things, I would help him to a situation if I could. I'll just speak to my cash-keeper. He knows about vacant places better than I do.*"

And partly to get rid of a visitor whose unusual earnestness embarrassed him; partly out of a sudden apprehension that he might possibly be called upon by and by for pecuniary help, if no situation could be got for Harry, Mr. Sommerville left his easy chair, and had a consultation in the outer office with his confidential clerk. Very weary and faint, Martha remained standing in the private room. Many a

time in her own heart, with the bitterness of disappointed hope and wounded love, she had condemned Harry; but with the fierceness of a lion-mother, her heart sprang up to defend him when another voice pronounced his sentence. She could not bear the slightest touch of censure—instinctively she dared and defied whosoever should accuse him—and no one had liberty to blame Harry except the solitary voice which came to her in the night watches wrung out of her own heart.

In a short time Mr. Sommerville returned.

“ I hear of one place, Miss Muir,” said the merchant; “ but there is security needed, and that might be a drawback—seventy pounds a-year—a good salary, but then they want security for five hundred pounds. If you could manage that, the place is a very good one—Rowan and Thomson—and it is a traveller they want.

—not so much confinement as in an office ; it might suit your brother very well, if it were not for the security.”

“ It would not do,” said Martha, quickly. “ Harry cannot be a traveller—it would kill him.”

Mr. Sommerville elevated his eyebrows. “ Cannot be a traveller ! Upon my word, Miss Muir, to say that you came asking my help, you are very fastidious. I fancied your brother would be glad of any situation.”

“ Not this—only not this,” said Martha, in haste, as if she almost feared to listen to the proposal, “ Harry is not strong. I thank you, Mr. Sommerville, I thank you ; but it would kill him.”

“ Then, I know of nothing else,” said the merchant, coldly resuming his seat. “ If I hear of anything, I will let you know.”

Cold words of course, often said, never remembered. Martha turned away down

the dusty stair, blaming herself for thus wasting the time in which she might have been working ; but she could work—could give daily bread to the little household still—and that was the greatest comfort of her life.

Far different from the mill-girls and engineers of Port Dundas was the passing population in these dusty streets. Elderly merchantmen, with ease and competence in every fold of their spotless broadcloth— young ones exuberant and unclouded, casting off the yoke of business as lightly, out of the office, as they bore it sensibly within, met Martha at every step. Here come some, fresh from the Exchange. You can see they are discussing speculations, calculating elaborate chances, perhaps “ in the way of business,” hazarding a princely fortune, which may be doubled or dissolved before another year. And a group of young men meet them, louder and more demonstrative, circling round one who is

clearly the object of interest to all. Why? —he is going out to India to-morrow to make his fortune—and save that it gives him a little importance, and makes him the lion of the day, envied by all his compeers, this youth, who is flushed just now with a little excitement, in reality feels no more about his Indian voyage, than if it were but a summer expedition to the Gairloch, or Roseneath Bay; and is much more comfortably assured of making his fortune, than he would be of bringing home a creditable amount of trout, if the event of to-morrow was a day's fishing, instead of the beginning of an eventful life. Of the youths round him, one will be the representative partner of his "house" in far America before the year is out; another will feed wool in the bush; another learn to adorn his active northern life, with oriental pomps and luxuries by the blue waves of the Bosphorus. And among them all there is a



certain fresh confident unconscious life, which, so far as it goes, carries you with it in sympathy. It is not refined, it is not profound, it has little elevation and little depth; but withal it has such a fresh breeze about it, such a continual unceasing motion, such an undoubting confidence in its own success, that this simplicity of worldliness moves you as if it were something nobler. Not true enough, nor great enough to call the solemn "God speed" out of your heart; yet you cannot choose, but wish the young adventurers well.

And there are clerks more hurried; young men with quick business-step and eye, whose sons shall be merchants' sons, as carelessly prosperous as are the young masters in the office now; but some who will live and die poor clerks, yet who will have their share of enjoyed life as well, and end their days as pleasantly, pass and repass among the crowd. Some, too, who



will sink and fall, who will break hearts, and give fair hopes the death-blow. So much young life—so many souls, each to make its own existence for itself, and not another. There come solemn thoughts into the mind which looks on such a scene.

And Martha, half abstracted, looked on it, comparing them with Harry. But there was none like Harry—not one; the heart that clasped its arms about him in his misfortune—the dry eye which watched the night long with schemes for his prosperity—could see none worthy to be placed beside him. Poor Harry! his sister could not see these others, for his continual shadow resting on her heart.

When Martha had nearly reached the Exchange, she heard some one calling after her. It was John Buchanan; he came up out of breath.

“ Will you tell Harry that I think he should come down and see my father, Miss

Muir?" gasped John. "I've been chasing you for ten minutes—you walk so fast. My father's come home, and he's shut up with Dick. I don't think he's pleased. If Harry would come down to-morrow, it might be all right again."

## CHAPTER XVI.

"'Tis the weak who are overbold ; your strong man can count upon the might he knoweth ; your feeble one, in fancy sets no bound to his bravery, nor thinks it time to fail till there is need of standing."

OLD PLAY.

"SEVENTY pounds a-year," repeated Harry Muir, as his sisters and his wife sat round him, all of them now busy with the "opening," while Violet kept the baby ; "and my uncle might be security, say for three hundred pounds. It's a mere matter of form, you know. Perhaps they would take him for three hundred instead of five ; and Rowan and Thomson is a very good house. I think I might go down to-morrow and inquire."

“ It would not do—you must not think of it,” said Martha quickly.

“ Why must I not think of it? I don’t believe John Buchanan is right, Martha, about his father quarrelling with Dick for sending me away. And, besides, how could I return there, where they all know I was dismissed — *dismissed*, Martha; besides Dick’s own abuse. I could not do it. I would rather do anything than go back; —and seventy pounds a-year!”

“ Harry, let us rather labour for you night and day.”

His face grew red and angry. “ Why, Martha? I am not a child surely that I cannot be trusted. What do you mean?”

“ No,” said Martha bitterly, “ you are not a child; you are a full-grown man, with all the endowments a man needs to do something in the world. You can constrain the will of these poor girls, who think of you every hour they live; and you can assert your independence, and be

proud, and refuse to bear the reproof you have justly earned. God forgive me if I am too hard ; but you wear me out, Harry. When I say you must not seek for a fatal occupation like this, have I not cause ? Do I need to descend to particulars ? Would you have me enter into detail ?”

“ Martha ! Martha !” The trembling hand of Rose was on her arm, anxiously restraining her ; and Agnes looked up into the sullen cloud on Harry’s face, whispering, “ Do not be angry ; she does not mean it, Harry.”

“ Is it because I am in your power that you taunt me, Martha ?” he said, fiercely.

Martha compressed her lips till they grew white ; she did not answer. After the first outburst, not even the cruel injustice of this received a reply. She had herself to subdue before she could again approach him.

And the two peacemakers, hovering between them, endeavoured, with anxious

pains, to heal the breach again. The young wife whispered deprecatory words in Harry's ear, while she laid her hand on Martha: but pitiful looks were all the artillery of Rose; they softened both the belligerents.

"I don't care what happens to us out of the house, Martha," said Rose at last; "but surely we may be at peace within. There are not so many of us in the world; we should be always friends."

And Martha's anger was shortlived. "I spoke rashly," she said, with strange humility; "let us say no more of this now."

And there was little more said that night.

But Harry would not go to the office again to see Mr. Buchanan; and, poor as they were, none of them desired to subject him to this humiliation. So he went out instead the next morning to make bootless inquiries and write bootless letters—ex-

ertions in which there was no hope and little spirit; went out gloomily, and in gloom returned, seeking comfort which they had not to bestow.

But while poor Harry was idle perforce, a spasmodic industry had fallen upon the rest. They scarcely paused to take the simple meals of necessary life; and the pleasant hour of family talk at tea was abridged to-night to ten minutes, sadly grudged by the eager labourers, on whose toil alone depended now the maintenance of the family. 'Little Violet stood by the table with a clean towel in her hand, preparing, with some importance, to wash the cups and saucers when they had finished. But Harry lingered over the table, leaning his head on his hand, and trifling with something which lay by him. Violet, in housewifely impatience, moved about among the cups, and rung them against each other to rouse his attention, and let him see he retarded her; but Harry's

mind was too much occupied to notice that.

“ Harry,” cried Agnes, rather tremulously from the inner room, “ I see Mr. Gilchrist on the road. He is coming here. What can it be ? ”

Harry started and put away his cup. They all became anxious and nervous ; and Agnes hastily drew her seat close to the door of the room, that she might hear what the visitor said, though her baby, half dressed, lay on her knee, very sleepy and impatient, and she could not make her appearance till she had laid him in his little crib for the night.

Thus announced, Mr. Gilchrist entered the room. He was a massy large man, with grizzled hair, which had been reddish in his younger days, and kindly grey eyes gleaming out from under shaggy eyebrows. His linen was spotless ; but his dress, though quite appropriate and respectable, was not very trim ; little layers of snuff



encumbered the folds of his black waistcoat ; and from a steel chain of many complicated links, attached to the large round silver watch in his fob, hung two massy gold seals, one of them engraven with an emphatic “ J. G.” of his own, the other an inheritance from his father. There was no mistaking the character and standing of this good and honourable man ; his father before him had been head clerk in an extensive mercantile house in Glasgow ; his sons after him might be that, or greater than that. With his two hundred pounds a-year, he was bringing up such a family as should hereafter do honour and service to their country and community ; and for himself, no better citizen did his endeavour for the prosperity of the town, or prayed with a warmer heart, “ Let Glasgow flourish.”

“ Harry, my man,” said Mr. Gilchrist, as he held Harry’s hand in his own, and shook it slowly, “ I am very sorry about this.”

“ Well, it cannot be helped,” said Harry with a little assumed carelessness, “ we must make the best we can of it now.”

“ Ay, no doubt,” said the Cashier, as he turned to shake hands with Rose and Martha, “ to sit down and brood over a misfortune, is not the way to mend it; but it may not be so bad as you think. Angry folk will cool down, Harry, if ye leave them to themselves a little.”

Harry’s heart began to beat high with anxiety—and Rose cast furtive glances at Mr. Gilchrist, as she went on nervously with her work, almost resenting Martha’s calmness. But Agnes had entered just then from the inner room, and the kindly greeting, which the visitor gave her, occupied another moment, during which the excitable Harry sat on thorns, and little Violet, holding the last cup which she had washed in her hands, polished it round and round with her towel, turning solemn

wide open eyes all the time upon this messenger of fate.

“I have a letter from Mr. Buchanan,” said Mr. Gilchrist, drawing slowly from his pocket a note written on the blue office paper. Harry took it with eager fingers. Agnes came to the back of his chair, and looked over his shoulder. Rose, trying to be very quiet, bent her head over her work with a visible tremor, and Martha suffered the piece of muslin she had been working at, to fall on her knee, and looked with grave anxiety at Harry.

Round and round went the glancing tea-cup in the snowy folds of the towel which covered Lettie's little hands—for she too forgot what she was doing in curious interest about this; a slight impatient exclamation concluded the interval of breathless silence. “No, I cannot take it—it is very kind, I daresay, of Mr. Buchanan; but I cannot accept this,”

exclaimed Harry as he handed the letter across the table to Martha.

But the visitor saw, that in spite of Harry's quick decision, he looked at his sister almost as if he wished her opinion to be different. Agnes too changed her position, and came to Martha's side. The letter was very short.

“ SIR,

“ MY son has informed me of the circumstances under which you have left the office. I regret the loss for your sake, as well as my own, but I cannot feel myself justified in doing what I hear my son threatened to do, consequently if you will call at the office in the course of to-morrow, Mr. Gilchrist has instructions to pay you the full amount of your quarter's salary, due on the 1st proximo.

“ I am, Sir,

“ Your obedient Servant,

“ GEORGE BUCHANAN.”

“ I cannot take it—I do not see how I can take it,” said Harry, irresolutely, as he sought Martha’s eye.

“ It’s nonsense, that,” said Mr. Gilchrist, taking out a large silver snuff-box and tapping slowly on its lid, with his great forefinger, “ you must look at the thing coolly, Harry, my man. It’s no fault of yours that you lost the money; no sensible person would blame you for that—a thing which has happened to many a one before. I mind very well being once robbed myself. I was a lad then, about your years, and the sum was thirty pounds; but by good fortune twenty of it was in an English note, and not being very sure whether it was canny or not, I had taken its number—so off I set to all the banks and stopped it. It was a July day, and I was new married, and had no superabundance of notes, let alone twenty-pounders—such a race I had,” said Mr. Gilchrist with a smile,

raising his red and brown handkerchief to his brow in sympathetic recollection, "I believe I was a stone lighter that night. I succeeded, however, and got back my English note very soon; but Mr. Buchanan would not hear of deducting the other ten from my salary; and he's better able to stand the loss of a few pounds now than he was then. Think better of it, Harry."

"I think Mr. Gilchrist is right," said Martha, "no one could possibly blame you for such a misfortune, Harry—and Mr. Buchanan is very good—you have no right to reject his kindness; it is as ungenerous to turn away from a favour frankly offered, as it is to withhold more than is meet."

"It is very well said, Miss Muir," said Mr. Gilchrist, contemplating the long inscription upon the heavy chased lid of his snuff-box, with quiet satisfaction. "I really think it would be an unkindly thing to throw back this, which was meant for

a kindness, into the hands that offer it. He is not an ill man, George Buchanan ; ‘ for one ye’ll get better, there’s waur ye’ll get ten,’ as the song says ; and besides, Harry, I was young once myself, and so was my wife. I mind when our James was in his cradle like that youngster there, we had just little enough to come and go on ; and for any pride of your own, you must see and not scrimp your wife. Touts man, you are not going to take ill what I say. Do you think, if I lost a quarter’s salary just now, it would not scrimp *my* wife ? and I think no shame of it.”

“ Neither do I think shame—certainly not,” said Harry, “ we have only what we work for. But I have actually lost Mr. Buchanan’s money—I don’t see—”

“ Harry,” interrupted Mr. Gilchrist, “ never mind telling me what you don’t see—come down to the office to-morrow, and hear what Mr. Buchanan sees—he has older eyes than you, and knows the world



better, and there's no saying what may come of it ; for you see, Mrs. Muir," continued the Cashier, casting down his kindly eyes again upon the grandiloquent inscription which testified that his snuff-box had been presented to him by young men trained in the office under his auspices, as a token of esteem and respect, " it is wonderful what a kindness everybody has for this lad. I myself have been missing his laugh this whole day, and scarcely knowing what ailed me—so maybe something better may turn up if he comes down to-morrow."

" And Martha thinks you should go—and mind all that we have to do, Harry," whispered Agnes.

A glow of pleasure was on Harry's face—he liked to be praised, and felt in it an innocent kindly satisfaction—but still he hesitated. To go back again among those who knew that he had been dismissed and disgraced—to humiliate



himself so far as again to recognise Dick Buchanan as his superior—to present himself humbly before Dick Buchanan's father, and propitiate his favour. It was very unpalatable to Harry, who after his own fashion had no lack of pride.

“I will see about it. I will think it over,” said Harry doubtfully.

“I think I must send our Tom to you in his red gown,” said Mr. Gilchrist; “where he got it, I cannot say, but they tell me the lad is a metaphysical man—if he ever gets the length to be a preacher, we will have to send him East, I'm thinking, for metaphysics seldom flourish here away; but now my wife will be redding me up for being so late. Mind, Harry, I will expect to see you at the office to-morrow.”

The good man rose to go away. “By-the-bye,” he added as he shook hands with Rose—and Rose felt herself look guilty under his smiling glance. “I saw

a friend of yours coming off the Ayr coach as I came up—the advocate lad, Mr. Buchanan’s nephew. You are sure of his good word, Harry, or else I am much mistaken.”

“Mr. Charteris!—he has come back very soon. Good night Mr. Gilchrist, I will think about it,” said Harry, as he went to the door with his sister.

Mr. Gilchrist left some excitement behind him. Agnes had risen into tremulous high spirits. Rose was touched with some tremor of anticipation, and Martha, watchful and jealous, looked at her sister now and then with scrutinising looks; for Mr. Gilchrist’s last words had awakened Martha’s fears for another of her children; while in the meantime little Violet had polished all the cups and saucers, and was now putting them with much care away.

“Harry will go—do you not think he must go, Martha?” said Agnes. “Mr.

Gilchrist says they miss him in the office. I don't wonder at that. He will go back again, Martha?"

"I think he should—I think he will," said Martha with a slight sigh. "There might have been something better in a change—one has always fantastic foolish hopes from a change—but I believe this is best."

Agnes was a little damped; for she saw nothing but the highest good fortune in this unlooked-for overture of Mr. Buchanan.

Harry lingered at the outer door in a very different mood. He, too, had been indulging in some indefinite hope from change. He could not see that the former evils lay in himself—poor Harry! He thought if the circumstances were altered, that happier results might follow—and while he was not unwilling to return to his former situation, and had even a certain pleasure in the thought that it was

open to him, the submission which it would be necessary to make, galled him beyond measure. He stood there at the door, moody and uneasy ; not weighing his own feelings against the well-being of the family, certainly, for Harry was not given to any such process of deliberation—but conscious that the two were antagonistic, and moodily letting his own painful share in the matter bulk largest in his mind.

Just then a hackney coach drew up at a little distance from the door, and Cuthbert Charteris leaped out. He was a good deal heated, as Harry thought, and looked as if he had taken little time to rest, or put his dress in order since he finished his journey—but he carried nothing except a little paper parcel. He came up at once to Harry and shook hands with him cordially—they went upstairs together.

“I have just come from Ayr,” said Cuthbert with some embarrassment, as

he took his old place at the window—  
“you must pardon my traveller’s costume,  
Mrs. Muir, for it is not half an hour since  
I arrived.”

“You have had little time to see the  
town,” said Harry. “Did you find my  
uncle? Has he sent any message with  
you, Mr. Charteris?”

“I have a message,” said Cuthbert,  
clearing his throat, and becoming flushed,  
“but before I deliver it, Mr. Muir, you  
must hear a long preface.”

“Is my uncle ill?” exclaimed Martha.  
“Has anything happened?”

“Nothing has happened. He is quite  
well,” said Cuthbert, “only I have been  
making some enquiries about your family  
concerns, for which I need to excuse my-  
self by a long story.”

Harry was still standing. He drew  
himself up with great hauteur, and coldly  
said, “Indeed!”

Rose lifted her head for a moment with

timid anxiety ; the light was beginning to fail, but Rose still sat in her corner holding the work which at present made little progress. Martha had laid down hers. Agnes had withdrawn to the sofa with her baby, who, already asleep, would very soon be disposed of in the cradle ; while Harry, with unusual stateliness, leaned against the table, looking towards Cuthbert.

“I think I mentioned before I went away,” said Charteris, “that my errand to Ayr was connected with one of those stories of family pride and romance and misfortune which sometimes lighten our legal labours. This story you must let me tell you, before I can explain how my motives for searching out these, were neither curiosity nor impertinence.”

As Cuthbert spoke, he opened his parcel, placed the old Bible on the table, and handed to Harry a little roll of papers. They were formal extracts from the

registers of the old church at Ayr, attested by the session clerk, proving the marriage of Rose Allenders with John Calder, and of Violet Calder with James Muir, together with the register of Harry's own birth.

Harry was quite bewildered ; he turned over the papers, half curious, half angry, and tried to look cool and haughty ; but wonder and interest defeated his pride, and impatiently calling for the candle, which Violet, with much care, was just then bringing into the room, Harry threw himself into the arm chair, and resting his elbows on the table, leaned his head upon both his hands, and fixed his eyes, with a half defiance in them, full upon Cuthbert.

The others drew near the light with interest and curiosity as great as his ; but though they held their breath while they listened, they did not restrain their fin-



gers—the necessity of work was too great to be conquered by a passing wonder.

“ Not much short of a century since,” said Cuthbert, becoming excited in spite of himself, “ a family in the neighbourhood of Stirling had their composure disturbed by what seemed to them the very foolish marriage of one of their sons. There were six sons in the family: this one was the fourth, and at that time had very little visible prospect of ever being heir. They were but small gentry, and I do not very well know why they were so jealous of their gentility; but however that might be, this marriage was followed by effects as tragic as if the offender had been a prince’s son instead of a country laird’s.

“ His father disinherited and disowned him; he was cut off from all intercourse with his family; but in his own affairs he seems to have been prosperous enough



until his wife died. That event closed the brighter side of life for this melancholy man. He had two daughters, then children, and with them he left Stirling."

A slight start moved the somewhat stiff figure of Martha; Rose unconsciously let her work fall and turned her head towards Cuthbert; Harry remained in the same position, fixedly gazing at him; while Agnes, rocking the cradle gently with her foot, looked on a little amused, a little interested, and not a little curious, wondering what the story could mean.

"After this," continued Cuthbert, "my hero, we suppose went to London (another strange start as if of one half asleep, testified some recognition, on Martha's part, of the story), but there I lose trace of him. It is only for a short time, however, for immediately afterwards I find him at Ayr."

"At Ayr?" Harry too, started now, and again turned over the papers, which

he still held in his hand, as if looking for a clue.

“ In the meantime,” said Cuthbert, “ all the other members of the family are dead ; there is no one remaining of the blood but this man—the children of this man.”

“ And his name ?” said Martha, with a slight hoarseness in her voice.

“ His name,” said Cuthbert, drawing a long breath of relief, as his story ended, “ was John Allenders.”

There was a momentary silence. They looked at each other with bewildered faces. “ What does it mean ?” said Harry, becoming very red and hot as the papers fell from his shaking fingers ; “ I cannot see—it is so great a surprise—tell us what it means.”

“ It means,” said Cuthbert, quickly, “ that you are the heir of John Allenders of Allenders, and of an estate which has

been in the family for centuries, worth more than four hundred pounds a year."

Harry looked round for a moment almost unmeaningly—he was stupified ; but Agnes stole, as she always did in every emergency, to the back of his chair, and laid her hand softly on his shoulder. It seemed to awake him as from a dream. With one hand he grasped hers, with the other he snatched the work from Martha's fingers and tossed it to the other end of the room. " Agnes ! Martha ! "

Poor Harry ! A sob came between the two names. and his eyes were swimming in sudden tears. He did not know what to say in the joyful shock of this unlooked-for fortune ; he could only grasp their hands and repeat their names again.

Cuthbert rose to withdraw, feeling himself a restraint on their joy, but Martha disengaged herself from the grasp of Harry, and would not suffer him to move.

" No, no ; share with us the pleasure you

bring. You have seen us in trouble, stay with us now."

"Is it true, Mr. Charteris, is it true?" said Agnes, while Harry, still perfectly tremulous and unsteady, threw Rose's work after Martha's, and shaded his eyes with his hands, lest they should see how near weeping he was—"Tell us if it is true."

Harry started to his feet. "True! do you think he would tell us anything that was not true? Mr. Charteris, if they were not all better than me, I would think it was a delusion—that neither such an inheritance nor such a friend could come to my lot. But it's for them—it's for them! and a new beginning, a new life—Martha, we shall not be worsted this time—it is God has sent us this other battle-field."

And Harry, with irrestrainable emotion, lifted up his voice and wept. His little wife clung to his shoulder, his stern sister

bent over him with such an unspeakable tenderness and yearning hope in her face, that it became glorified with sudden beauty—and Cuthbert remembered uncle Sandy's thanksgiving, and himself could have wept in sympathy for the solemn trembling of this joy; for not the sudden wealth and ease, but the prospect of a new life it was which called forth those tears.

“And what did my uncle say, Mr. Charteris,” said Rose, when the tumult had in some degree subsided. No one but Rose remembered that Cuthbert had spoken of a message from uncle Sandy.

“He bade me repeat to you a homely proverb,” said Cuthbert, who was quite as unsteady as the rest, and had been a good deal at a loss how to get rid of some strange drops which moistened his eye-lashes. “It takes a strong hand to hold a full cup steady; that is the philosophy I brought from your uncle.”

“No fear,” said Harry, looking up once more with the bright clear loveable face, which no one could frown upon. “No fear—what could I do with my arms bound? What could I do in yon office? but now, Martha, now!”

And Martha once more believed and hoped, ascending out of the depths of her dreary quietness into a very heaven. Few have ever felt, and few could understand this glorious revulsion. With an impatient bound she sprang out of the abyss, and scorned it with her buoyant foot. It might not last—perhaps it could not last—but one hour of such exulting certain hope, almost worth a lifetime’s trial.

“And I will get a little room all to mysel, and Katie Calder will come and sleep with me,” said Violet.

They all laughed unsteadily. It brought them down to an easier level.

“I think, Mr. Muir you should come at once with me to Edinburgh,” said

Cuthbert, "and see your lawyer, who has been hunting for you for some time, and get the proof and your claim established. I begin to think it was very fortunate he broke his leg, Miss Muir—for otherwise I might never have seen you."

"And what made you think of us? how did you guess?" said Harry.

"Rose and Violet," said Cuthbert, with a little shyness. "It was a happy chance which gave these names."

Rose drew back a little. There was something unusual, it seemed, in Cuthbert's pronunciation of her pretty name, for it made her blush; and by a strange sympathy Mr. Charteris blushed too.

"When shall we start? for I suppose you will go with me to Edinburgh," continued Charteris.

Harry hesitated a moment. "I must go down to the office to-morrow," he said, with his joyous face unclouded. "Your cousin Dick and I had something which I

thought a quarrel. It was nothing but a few angry words after all. I will go down to-morrow."

Harry had entirely forgotten how angry he was—entirely forgotten the insulting things Dick Buchanan said, and what a humiliation he had felt it would be, to enter that office again. Poor Harry was humble now. He had such a happy ease of forgetting, that he did not feel it necessary to forgive. Bright, sanguine, overflowing with generous emotions, Harry in his new wealth and happiness that night could not remember that there was any one in the world other than a friend.

END OF VOL. I.

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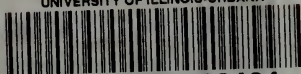








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